



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

B

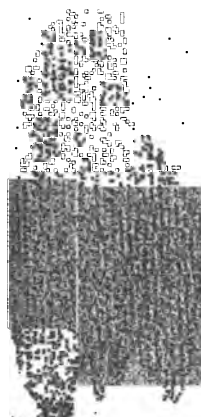
960,271



MARGARET FULLER

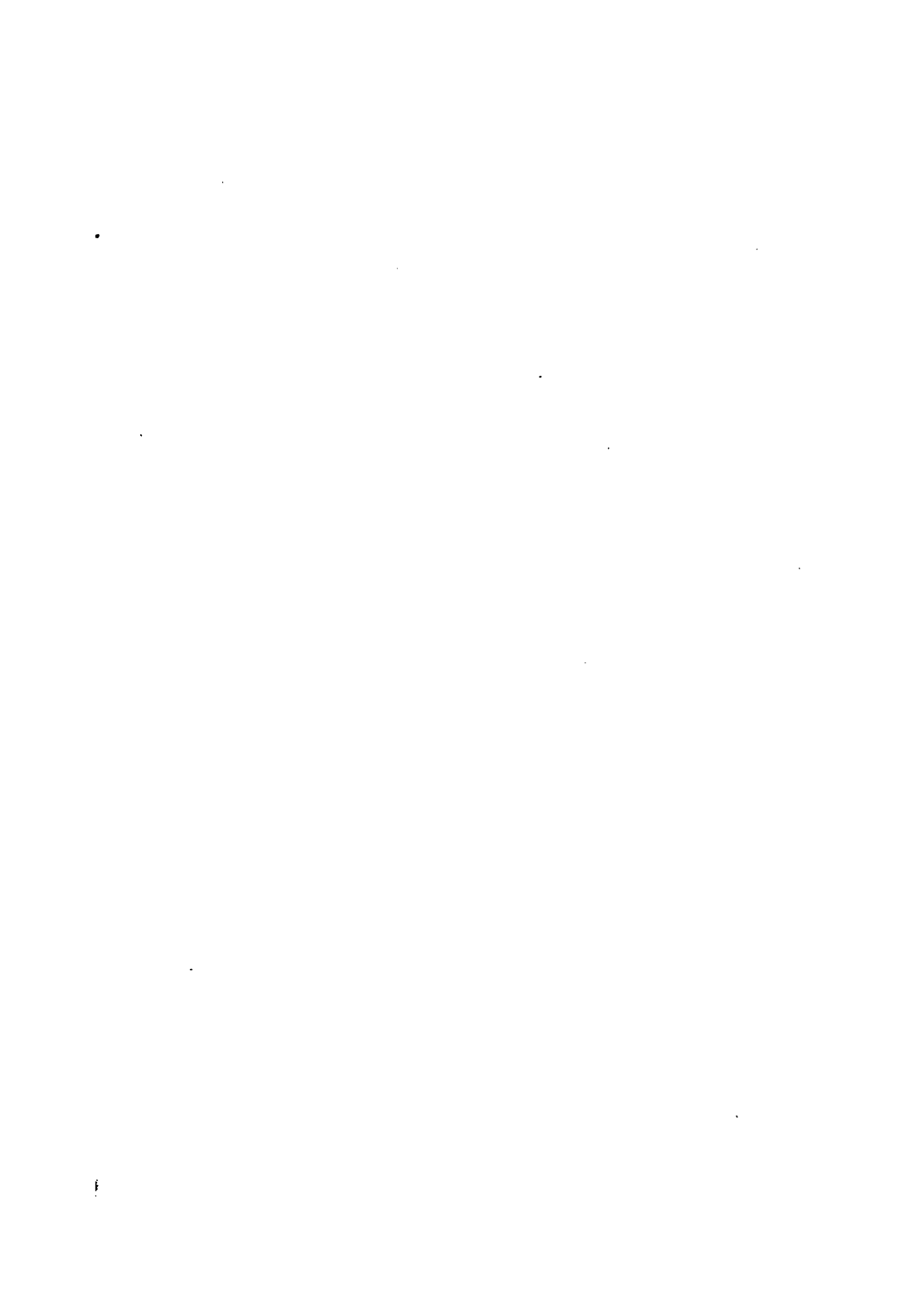


THE GIFT OF
PRESIDENT
HARLAN HATCHER



135

A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD



Ossoli, Sarah

A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

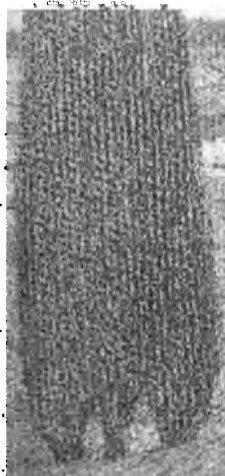
BY
MARGARET FULLER



BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1916



THE GIFT OF
PRESIDENT
HARLAN HATCHER





103

A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

Ossoli, Saran

A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

BY
MARGARET FULLER



BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1916

828
584 ne.
1916

Copyright, 1916,
BY LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

All rights reserved

Published, September, 1916

Norwood Press
Set up and electrotyped by J. S. Cushing Co., Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.
Presswork by S. J. Parkhill & Co., Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

Gift
Mrs. Nathan Butler
1-11-68
6755-271

THIS BOOK IS WRITTEN TO
LITTLE PHILLIS HOPE

FOREWORD

THIS is a true story of a little boy who grew to be a notable man — Edmund Clarence Stedman.

I lived in his house when he became a man, but before that day I too had been a little child and had lived in the places where he had lived; I too had tried to make a trout brook out of the Stedman rain barrel; I had listened to the graybeards tell tales in Fuller's store; I had fashioned a seat in the willows along Bobbin Mill Brook, — his brook of lost youth that has minished until to-day it is only a rivulet whose gurgle you must stay your step to catch; and I have interchanged confidences with Lady Sarah Huntington, — last of the La-

dies Huntington,—staring past her all the while into the marvelous oil painting on the wall, whose actual clock in its canvas belfry pealed with marriage bells as often as the slow-footed afternoon brought due a laggard hour. These places of which I tell you are real places: the people are real people.

Do I not know of what I write! Gentle Annie who fetched Edmund in the buggy to her father's house has carried me up and down the Judge's stairway, with my head held close against her cheek and with the silvery shadow of her brow against my tangled hair. On the topmost steep of the Hampton burial ground, my kinsmen's names stand fast around the names of their best friends, the Stedmans long years gone.

I tell you this because when you read how the child Edmund brought upwards his heel in sharp pain under the heaviest of his grandfather's strokes and shattered the spectacles on the old gentleman's nose, I want you to believe that he surely did lie across the venerable knee—a little four-year-old, both too proud on his

own account to raise an outcry, and too tender of his fair girl-mother who was sobbing from sympathy in the next room. And when you read how he ran away after having been given over to the Judge, his uncle, — I want you to remember that he ran away in the dream of finding that same fair mother, and that “as he sailed, as he sailed,” the big round face of his uncle who was pursuing him did loom slowly above the gunwale, and the runaway-in-pinafore was passed forth by the black-frocked, ministerial-looking, tipsy captain and forced to walk the plank right into the uncle’s skiff.

My very hand which writes these pages to you has handled pages and pages of letters written by that same child to that same far-off mother through the wistful years that followed, — years which we who love young children would forget.

And above all else, I want you to feel that he was most worthy of remembrance in that he loved all little children, and in that all men were children to him if they were saddened, or in need, or were helpless — even as sheep with-

out a shepherd, and as little lads without a mother.

Now read my story and be certain that every word I say of him is true.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THE stanzas from Mr. Stedman's poems included in this book are published by the kind permission of Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, authorized publishers of his works.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	THE INVITED FAIRY	1
II	THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY	8
III	EDMUND'S FIRST LESSON IN RHYME	20
IV	A TAVERN ON WHEELS	38
V	THE HURRYING WORLD	52
VI	FROM SUNDOWN TO SUNDOWN	69
VII	HARLAND HOUSE	87
VIII	CAPTAIN MARRYAT'S MANTLE	96
IX	TWILIGHT AND EVENING STAR	117
X	PRINCE FLORIZEL ON HIS TRAVELS	121
XI	AH, THE IMMORTAL PASSADO !	137
XII	OUT OF THE FRYING PAN	146
XIII	THE WANDER SUMMER	157
XIV	GOD TEMPERING THE WIND	180
XV	FULLER'S STORE	195
XVI	A PARSON OF THE OLD SCHOOL	220
XVII	THE GILDED CAGE	241
XVIII	THE SNOWS OF YESTERYEAR	255
XIX	THE DOORSTEP	269
XX	THE INFINITE SHORE	289

1

A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

I

THE INVITED FAIRY

A THREE-STORY brick house with uncompromising square windows set in its square walls and with a ponderous oaken door lit by a gleaming brass knocker stood at the corner of Main and High streets, Hartford, gazing down over meadow land to the Connecticut River and to the ships that came and went as if they sailed in the grass, — but this was in the year 1833.

In those days, huge, round, rough cobblestones, — at least they seemed huge to little feet, and they were certainly rough and round, — studded the thoroughfare, and heavy drags and stages, — there were no horse cars then, nor any railways, — rattled and rumbled as they jolted along on their road through the town. Close at hand,

2 A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

according to a man's way of thinking, arose the steeple of the Reverend Doctor Bushnell's Meeting-house, one of the trio of sister churches that were the Three Graces of Main Street. They seemed near at hand to a man, but to a pretty truant just learning to gad alone, they were a Sabbath-day's journey distant.

You will guess that I have a reason for telling you so particularly about this house and this church. Edmund Clarence Stedman was christened in the North Congregational Church by the Reverend Horace Bushnell, and he came to the brick house to live when he was just one year and six months old.

Edmund was born in a cottage in Main Street, October the eighth, 1833, at eight o'clock of the evening. His hair was as black as a pirate's, and he wore it long. He was as solemn as an owl. He stared at his flannels as if he did not approve of their cut; he stared at his rattle as if it might perhaps beguile a younger child than he; and when he was presented with a coral ring, he stuck his fist into his mouth to signify that he could amuse himself.

But he was not the only baby under the cottage roof that autumn, according to the nurse Susan's way of thinking. A violet-eyed, beautiful girl lay on a couch drawn close to the bedroom window, and when she called the tiny infant, "little son!" — the motherly Susan who was cossetting him against her comfortable homespun dress glanced over his dusky head to the youthful head against the pane, and cried, "Baby, indeed! you are nothing but a baby yourself, my pet." Then she stroked the child-mother's golden curls with her one hand, and with her other hand held fast the helpless, struggling little elf, lest his unwitting fists might rumple his mother's lace-ruffled gown; and she cooed to the one and scolded the other; and then cooed over the other and scolded the one, until to hear her you could not have told which of her two charges was the baby.

But the real mother was watching the real baby with deepening eyes. She caught his clinging hands and kissed them. His wandering, regardless glance fixed on her smile. His serious brow drew itself into a pucker. Is he going to

4 A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

cry? Is this the way for a young gentleman to greet his mama whom he sees for the first time clad not in everyday white but in a silk as blue as her eyes, and with her ringlets wound up into a wreath of gold.

"He smiles!" cried the mother, radiant.

"He will become a notable man," replied the nurse sagely. "A babe that smiles before it is forty days old is born to be a wonder."

"He is to be a poet — my poet," murmured the young girl fondly.

"Heaven forbid!" cried Susan in consternation. "How could we live with any more papers in the house! Mercy! It's books everywhere now, and scribblings on everything. I don't dare to throw away an old billhead, let alone clean off a shelf! Not that we all are not glad that you are a poetess, Miss Elizabeth, and not that we are not proud of you. But pray heaven that the lad proves like his father, — a downright brave, true gentleman; with a purse open to whoever has need of it, and with never a thought for himself. There is not many a husband who cherishes and fosters his young wife as Major

Edmund cherishes you, my pretty girl, — and he so full of strength and spirit.”

“But little Edmund could be like his father and be a poet too,” said the mother, with a toss of her lovely curls.

“Don’t you go to putting notions into his head,” said Susan, prancing the baby to and fro to keep his gaze from fixing upon his mother.

“Well, Susan, you may invite the good fairies, Constancy, and Honor, and Truth, and Generosity, and Self-forgetfulness to come to his christening,” returned the mother, with a wilful curve to her lip, “but I am going to invite the Muses — the whole Nine!”

“And let Want come too, and Misery, and Grief, I suppose!” cried Susan, on her mettle.

“Certainly; what will it matter so long as Song is there! Dame Care may come to be my little son’s guest, if she likes!”

“It does well enough for you to say it — you who have never known a hardship, and have a man’s arm to fend for you and guard you and a man’s shoulder to set itself between you and each ill-lunged breath that

6 A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

blows. Ah, Miss Elizabeth, how many a poor woman, watching your husband pass, may not murmur, — ‘Would to God that I had such a man!’”

“My husband likes to take thought for other people. He enjoys it. Taking care is a good deal a matter of choice.”

“Taking care is a matter of heart,” said Susan stoutly.

✱

The girl-mother’s eyes were as wonderingly round and as vaguely questioning as the baby’s. She did not understand greatly this talk of misery and self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice was something about which one wrote in poetry, and concerning which it was well enough for elderly folk to prate. She smiled gaily, and again the baby smiled. And when he did smile, what an owlsh, self-contained young person he was, — a perfect parson!

“We will have Song, will we not, dear heart!” she cried, snatching at the darling feet to kiss them. “Song and Music; and then if that ugly fairy, Dame Care, likes to come too, — let her come!”

But good Susan was on her way to the kitchen, bearing the baby Edmund in her arms, and with her palm and forefingers stopping both his ears, lest his wits be drawn away from following the homelier path of his father.

II

THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY

By the time that Edmund came to live in the brick house, he was considered old enough to take a constitutional by himself, and he used to trudge down the street to the Reverend Horace Bushnell's sanctuary and hold forth in the portico after the fashion of that worthy. But it was safe at home that he practised his untried powers unabashed, and it was after a year's practice that his mother's sister, his Aunt Melissa, found him on the floor, seated on his cousin's head, and droning in his babyhood treble a forceful sequence of ohs and ahs.

"Land alive! Edmund, what are you doing?" cried the astonished lady.

"Pweaching," lisped the nigh three-year-old, and straightened manlike to feel the pull of his suspenders.

"But you are sitting on your cousin's head; he is black in the face."

"I'm Weverend Bushnell, and I want him to listen."

"But Doctor Bushnell never sits on your father's head, or on your head, or on mine, when he wants us to listen."

Edmund's face grew thoughtful. "But you can't get away till he's through," he replied, after weighing the question.

That argument was not to be gainsaid. Aunt Melissa seized the melancholy congregation by the sleeve and with a jerk landed him blubbering on his feet. "Why do you let little Edmund sit on you, — a great boy like you, three times his size and half again his age? Look at him; he's only a weanling!"

The congregation, spying down from the superior ground of his height upon his tiny kinsman, stood nevertheless as the Philistine before David. "But Ned is so masterful," he said, after a snivel. "And he kicks me in my stomick with his heels."

Edmund thrust his hands into his pantaloons'

pockets. "I *had* to kick him," he interposed calmly, "'cause when I didn't, he roared like a bull, and I was pertending that I was preaching, and I was pertending that he was a lost soul."

Aunt Melissa was a strong Christian, and a Baptist. She too looked down on the baby, but not unkindly. "Don't forget that you have a soul of your own to save, my pretty Immortal," she said gravely.

Aunt Melissa never forgot Edmund's soul. She carried like a load the remembrance of those who did not believe precisely as she believed. Her purse was always open to the cause of cannibals, and many a needy relative would have done well to have been a pagan on the Ganges.

Wandering aimless through the house on a rainy interminable morning, shut from the sight of the river, and with silence reigning up-stairs and down-stairs and in my lady's chamber, was dull pastime for a baby of three; especially for a baby who has been put into breeches and is expected to behave like a man. Shut

THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY 11

fast inside her room, Edmund's mother wrote poems, undistracted by questioning prattle, and outside the locked door, Edmund built block houses that fell endlessly. The solitariness and the dearth quickened his wits beyond his years.

"Mother, I've swallowed a pin!" he shouted, in a joy that betrayed that his plight was imaginary.

No answer.

Would nothing terrify his dear one into opening the door!

The baby began another castle and again it fell as flat as old Sisera.

Aunt Melissa passed through the hallway, gloved and hooded. Little Edmund waited until she was out of hearing; then dragging at the door-latch of his mother's bedroom, he pressed his lips to the crack.

"Muvver, muvver," he whispered beguilingly to his ritual-devoted mama, "open the door quick. Aunt Melissa is going to take me to a *drefful baptism*!"

The word "baptism" proved a Sesame; the

key turned, the door drew back ; and Edmund, clutching and climbing, held his adored mother fast, a self-surrendered prisoner to his wiles.

With his father he had romped boisterously during their brief days together, albeit the two made no great noise, for Papa had been more guardful than Mama herself that she should not be disturbed. His playtime with his father had come when the day's work was over. Up and down they had gone, Papa the horse, carrying his little lad pickaback. Papa called Edmund his little Clarence ; he said it was his *nom de caresse* — his *love-name*. Sometimes they talked together soberly like old people, lying full length on the rug in the firelight, Edmund junior with his elbows pillowed on Edmund senior's chest.

"What now?" cried his father, when Edmund with one little fist grasped in the other fist for a pencil traced the wrinkle between his father's eyes.

"A scowl," said Edmund.

"That is not a scowl."

"A scowl," reiterated Edmund.

"No," persisted his father, "it is a line of care."

"Care," echoed the baby.

"Care is love, little boy. You know what love is. Papa loves Mama very much; Papa loves you, little son. You two, — his wife, his son, — are dearer to him than all the world. You have seen how rough the wind can blow? You have felt how the hoar frost bites? Papa is thinking always and planning always that no uncaring blast shall smite his darlings — no wintry want come nigh their dwelling. Papa is planning how to make it always summer for them. And sometimes, when Papa thinks of it, he looks thoughtful, and that makes the line of care. When you are a man, Clarence, you may have wrinkles just as Papa has."

Edmund Clarence pulled his brow into puckers.

"Not all over your forehead!" cried his father in mock dismay.

Edmund nodded. He would not be outdone.

"But why so many?"

"Why?" echoed the baby, and stopped. His thoughts were like shy birds in a mist, and he

had not learned to call them to him. His hands sprang to his father's cheeks. "I love you — love you," he repeated, so like his mother! "And I love muvver."

"To distraction?"

"Distwaction," repeated the child.

And there the matter rested.

It seemed to Edmund junior that whenever his mother was not writing poetry, she was tired and wished him to be quiet; and when he was most quiet, she fell ill. The unbroken silence during her illness, and the keen weeks of his father's bitter sickness that followed her convalescence made him older than ever for his age. And when he saw his mother, his gay, irrepressibly joyous mama, shaken with sobs and clinging to his father as if she never could let him go, child that he was, he felt himself a man. He walked to and fro through his play sedately, and once when the stilly night was startled by a cry, he leaned from his unwatched crib and whispered "Hush, hush!" as if he were the nurse. And when his father walked in the garden once more and finding him silently at play with a toy boat,

strained his son to him, the little lad caught his breath and winked hard. Big boys like him did not cry; mother had told him, and mother loved him to distraction! — she said so — precisely as he loved her.

But in the evening when he lay in his father's arms, just as in the days before the illness, something came into his throat that choked and hurt him. Yet they talked for all that. They did not have to play that Edmund was a man. They were two men together now, — the father in the languor of helplessness that was closing in around him; the son in the unvexed growth that was his. Only three weeks earlier, and Edmund had dragged at his father's beard and beaten him in the chest with his vigorous young heels; and now the little boy's eyes fixed on his father's eyes broodingly, and the restive hands lay limp along the wasted shoulders.

"Big boat," said the child at last. Ah, it was the thought of separation that stilled the tireless feet, that shadowed the ardent eyes! It was the voyage that the father was to make in search of the fountain of health!

The father held him closer.

"Little son, there was a man, four hundred years ago, who sailed from his home and all that he loved, to find a way around the world. And after weary months of sailing, he espied a new world lying close against the horizon. And he praised God. That man was Columbus, and the country that he discovered was our America. And after a while he sailed back home again and brought word to his dear ones that he had found a better country than their country, better even than their fatherland. Yet perhaps at the very first, there had been reasons why he did not wish to set forth. Perhaps he shrank. Perhaps the mist through which he peered was the mist of tears. But a voice in his heart kept crying: 'Sail — Sail!' and that voice was the voice of God. Now it may be that Papa will be called to go away, — it may be to discover a better country for his loved ones. My little boy will not make it hard for me, will he? — by shedding tears; or, after I am gone, by forgetting to be manly, and caring for Mama?"

His little lad slipped from his knees, then in a

moment climbed them and clung. Bless him in his innocency; he had fetched his Sunday cap!

"Father! Father!" he pleaded.

"Little son, no one may come with me. The voyage that I take, every man must take alone."

Gloaming closed around them. The fire-glow sank unheeded.

"It may be that somewhere in God's great Unknown waits a new, an undiscovered world, — a house not made by hands, eternal in the heavens. You cannot understand to-day, but you will learn to know hereafter."

Silence broken only by a sigh. . . .

The little hands were fast around the father's neck. The little cheek was close against his cheek, and between their lids a tear was stealing too slowly for a child's.

"You will ever be tender of mother — and loving? You will never leave her or forsake her? You will look at father's picture, and when you look, you will remember him — and her? Promise father."

18 A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

A little hand feeling through the gloom for the father's hand, and that was answer.

"Edmund, you will be thoughtful, obedient, — a good boy. Child! — son! — my son! — whom else have I to speak to! I cannot speak to Mama; it breaks my heart with anguish to see tears in her beautiful eyes! Edmund, you are my eldest son!"

It was true! In the chamber overhead, in Edmund's cradle, slept another little lad, Edmund's baby brother, Charles.

At sea, on the fourth day of December of the year 1835, in the dusk before dawn, Edmund Burke Stedman, little Edmund's father, died of quick consumption following a partial recovery from pneumonia contracted the earlier summer.

It may be that the mists encircling the voyager's helpless ship of life lifted, and that he descried the better country of which he had spoken, stretching along the ultimate horizon, gracious and true and constant, — the Undiscovered Country of God. Certainly, when the sailors came to look upon him for the last time, so vast a peace lay on his brow so lightly that the daystar

THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY 19

itself seemed fatherless and yet unfearful. Solitude for wife, children, home, earth, was nothing to him who lay in that majestic calm. He saw beyond the twin mystery of birth and death, and the line of care was gone.

III

EDMUND'S FIRST LESSON IN RHYME

THE wide-stretching room, the Sunday severity and oppressions of the great manor house in New Jersey to which his mother brought him after his father's death, made pictures in Edmund's memory. The house was set amid two hundred acres, through which a brook flowed, with cedar trees for guideposts pointing the way to Plainfield a mile below in the marshes. It was called Cedar Brook, and Elizabeth's father had newly bought it. Each night and morning the family sat around in straight-backed chairs, and Edmund's grandfather Dodge, — a tall, massive animal he appeared to the tiny grandson, — read the Scriptures. On Sabbaths and fast days, the household arose at half-past four, and the patriarch catechised them, not overlooking Edmund although he was so small.

The morning Scripture portion seemed all day long to Edmund, it was so long ; and the nightly prayer seemed longer than a thousand nights. He winked and nodded, and then he stared to keep awake ; and then he nodded again. Sometimes, at prayers in the morning, his foot went to sleep, but at night he went to sleep all over. And what a plight he was in, night or morning ! If he stirred ever so little, his grandfather's eye lifted from the Bible and traveled over the tops of his gold-bowed spectacles with so uncompromising a sternness that Edmund was instantly still, blinking like a star. He was not suffered to sit beside his darling mother ; they said that her fond looks spoiled him. The "they" were his grandfather and his great-aunt and some other people whom he could not tell apart, and who were equally elderly and sedate. So he sat between his great-aunt and some one else quite like her, and no sooner did his grandfather Dodge glance the little boy's way than his great-aunt reached out and tapped Edmund with her forefinger rebukingly. But his grandfather was always the first to catch him stirring.

Evening prayers did not come till nine o'clock, and nine o'clock seemed midnight to the child. His strife against disgrace was terrible. His lids would falter and fall until at last he was too heavy with sleep to fight or fear and, in spite of his grandfather's disinheriting countenance and his great-aunt's pokes, he sank down in the big chair, and would have lurched head foremost to the floor if the servant, at a sign from his grandmother, had not lifted him by the arm and led him off to bed.

No one spoke or moved when grandfather read to himself, even from the newspaper. When he wished to read, he took his seat beside a stand on which stood two candles made by grandmother's own hands; then grandmother took her place at the farther side of the stand and mildly knitted, casting guardful glances through the room to maintain an absolute hush. Her needles whispered, "Whist! — Whist! — Whist!" The logs as big as trees that burned on the hearth, — there was no other fire, — dwindled without a crackle.

The stiffness and silence did not wear upon his mother. At prayers she looked as saintly as you

please, but once in the orchard she shook out her pretty curls and danced; and sometimes she sang in the household's very faces. She did not care about the gloom one bit. And, Oh! to see her! Surely she was beautiful; there was no doubt about her beauty. And she had the most fascinating boxes and jewels which little lads were not to touch. She would sit before her table, — showing the ancient mirror her youthful face and making ready for a guest at dinner, or for nobody at all, — for hours together. But the hour never seemed a minute long to Edmund when he was watching her, and not so much as his foot went to sleep. He stood, silent with wonder, and adoring, while his wistful deep eyes journeyed now from the face in the glass to the face at his side, and now back to the face in the glass. First there was marvelous powder, white like snow, that lost itself on her white shoulders. There was gold dust in a bottle that she sifted over her hair. There were multitudes of silks in her chests that were just like her, — as if the merest particles of herself had flecked off and been captured. And over everything there was

a fragrant breath like the fields where the mowers go. It was enchanting. Edmund could not be certain whether it was his mother's fingers that made her gauds so sweet, or whether it was the perfume that made her fingers so like grasses. In merriment, she dashed a drop of the sweetest scent of all, a scent that was in a bottle, on the tip of his aquiline little nose, and at night he went to sleep, sniffing softly and *pretending* that Mama was in bed beside him. What an idea! When he had had a room apart from her ever since — as he said — he was a little boy!

Yes, his mama was very beautiful. He used to clamber out of bed and steal to the top of the stairway and look down to see her when there was company. Every one looked at her, — all the guests, — and when she spoke, they listened and laughed. One day, in the garden, a gentleman took him on his knee and said: "My boy, your mother is a gifted woman!" Edmund did not know what the words meant, but sudden tears sprang to his eyes, he felt so proud of her, so full of longing to run and take her in his arms.

He practiced writing. He could make all the letters now that he was four, and he could spell words, provided the words were "cat" or "dog" or "God" or "cow"; but he could read more words than he could spell, and when he read them to himself, he did not read what they truly were but made stories out of them, — stories that did not have an end or a beginning and that ran along of themselves.

But he had to take good care to say the words as they were printed when he stood on the footstool at his grandfather's knee and read his daily lesson. If he mispronounced so much as a syllable, a broadside on his ear from his grandfather's hand sent him flat to the floor. You may be sure he paid heed to his p's and q's. He spelled each word over to himself as fast as he could, — to make sure, — and then he said it slowly and regardfully, glancing forward all the while to the next word to see if it was one he knew. When it came to spelling from memory, some of the simplest looking words were the most difficult. He had no end of trouble with "God." "God" used to get mixed up in his

mind with "dog" whenever his grandfather looked at him, and he knew beforehand whichever way he began to spell it, he would begin it wrong. "God" was truly the worst word of all. "God" was more vexatious than the catechism. And many a punishment the catechism cost him!

Edmund had as little idea of what rhyme was as he had of the meaning of the catechism. One afternoon, he came upon two lines clipped from a newspaper and pasted to an outhouse wall. He spelled them out. They bewitched him. Like the stories that he read out of his head, they went of themselves, and kept coming back without his trying to remember.

The first line was:

"What is the chief end of man?" the words of the catechism; and the second:

"To keep all he gets and to get all he can," an unauthorized and to his mind an improved version.

At the hour of weekly catechising, Grandfather Dodge's keen eye rested upon his wee grandson indulgently.

The lad is but a witless babe, doubtless the grown man thought, I will bear in mind that he was sent to bed last night without supper because he shouted loudly after sundown; I will give him a question that he has answered on many a bygone Sabbath morning.

"What is the chief end of man?" said the patriarch, and glanced around the circle mildly as if undecided whom to ask.

Instantly Edmund's eyes glowed. His sensitive, small nostrils twitched.

"Edmund," repeated the patriarch, "what is the chief end of man?"

"To keep all he gets and to get all he can!" rang out in the child's bright treble.

Astonishment and consternation coursed blood-like through his grandfather's temples. His smile hardened into stony dismay. This, then, was the guileless innocent! His heavy-browed eye turned from the offender in socks to Grandmother Dodge.

"Elizabeth," he said painfully, "Satan hath entered into the child!"

One by one the circle dropped away, as Ed-

28 A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

mund, in the grasp of his grandfather's hand, was led from the room.

Edmund suspected what was coming: he was going to be locked in his grandfather's boot closet under the stairway, — his one terror. It was a black hole — and so large! It yawned pathless and huge as a dungeon. And Edmund had told himself that there were snakes in it and bloodsuckers and holes a yard long. In after years, in the summer of 1906, when little Edmund himself was a grandfather, he returned to Plainfield to look at his childhood's prison and was surprised to find that he was forced to stoop to enter it. Perhaps the boot closet had grown small, while he had been growing large! I have seen houses and people that seem to grow small.

In the late afternoon of that Sabbath day, the bolt that had kept Edmund a prisoner was drawn back. No word was spoken. His grandfather laid him across his knee. Sobs unrestrained and childlike throbbed through the lonely walls, but they were not Edmund's. Edmund remembered his father and how he had

promised him to be thoughtful for his mother, and to do his best never to grieve her. It was pretty Elizabeth who was sobbing in her bedroom, — sobbing because Grandfather Dodge's hand fell so heavily upon her little son. But not a cry escaped Edmund. Only once, under the dire pain of the sharpest stroke of all, his heel lifted, and would you believe it? — gave the old gentleman's spectacles such a whack that they flew from his nose in a dozen pieces!

Then the two, grandfather and grandson, arose to their feet. They looked each other in the eye. Grandfather Dodge's look said as plainly as speech: "I trust I have given you something, my young Sir, to remind you for the present what is the chief end of a boy." Edmund's heaving chest and fast-closed lips said, "You haven't made me cry yet!"

And here ended Edmund's first lesson in rhyme, and here it began, for from that day he was always on the lookout to see if lines matched, and when they did match, he spelled them out to find if they were like the lines that he had been punished for repeating.

Edmund lay on his stomach, the forenoon after his whipping, and forgot the past, staring at the pictures in the family Bible. Each wood-cut looked as big to him as a Flemish chest. He had lifted the book down for himself, and was so excited over the chance of seeing Adam and Eve that he failed to think how naughty he was to touch his uncle's property without asking. He was quite comfortable when he did not try to sit down.

It was some days before he felt like running about the fields again. He felt unaccountably sore all over. And very tired. He had many a stealthy sight of Eve and Adam — and each time that he saw them, there they stood without vesture, gazing woodenly ahead, although the most fearful lions strolled around them; panthers too, and every kind of ravenous creature, and in particular a tiger that was sharpening its claws on a tree which had very evidently fallen to the earth for the convenience of felines. Every time that he lifted the book down and opened to the page, he expected to find our first parents devoured. Without cavil, Adam and Eve were

more daring even than Daniel, for there was an angel in the den to scare the lions, — Edmund had not been able to discover the angel, but the Bible said that the angel was there, — and, besides, Daniel wore smalls.

When Edmund's grandmother came upon him, how he jumped! He expected another whipping, but she looked gently down and murmured, "Pretty Edmund!" Her conduct was most perplexing. Often he was naughty when it never occurred to him that he was naughty; and sometimes when he surmised that he was naughty, he was treated as if he were good. Altogether, being naughty and being good was a bewildering enigma. He was never sure when reproof might fall. He tried not to get too near his elders, since they had bidden him to keep from under foot; yet, inquisitive and loving, he continued to follow them around — dallying half an ell behind. He was careful of his dress and very proud of the fact that he had ridden in a railway train when he came to Plainfield; he confided to his mother that the farm hands called him the "wailway woad dandy."

To make sure that he was kept out of mischief he was posted off to school, and not long afterwards he was taken from his first school and posted to a second. He did not study much. He gazed around and amused himself *pretending* to be studying. Neither one of his two masters punished him in the ways that he was punished at home and, not understanding that he was being punished when he was called to sit at the teacher's side, he felt affectionate and grateful, and not a bit ashamed.

When his mother folded his garments in a tiny pack, he thought it might be that he had been very bad, and that Grandfather Dodge was going to shut him up again in the boot closet and this time keep him there so long that his clothes would be worn out like the Israelites' shoes, and he would need some others. Edmund looked grave indeed, and his mother looked grave. Two tears slipped through her lashes, and a tear had splashed her cheek. A new thought struck Edmund. She had folded and laid aside his father's cloak and top boots, and had wept the while.

"Mother, am I going away?"

"Yes, Edmund."

A long pause. His shadowed face was distressfully inquiring.

"Are you going to send me to the burying-ground, Mother?" he at length asked.

She caught him up and kissed him a hundred times; kissed his hair and mouth and eyes, kissed him blind and breathless. And how they laughed — they two! No, certainly he was not going to be taken to the burying-ground! And after the laughter, they had a romp in the garden, such a romp as they had never had before. And earnest little Charlie pattered after them and fell prone and, forgetting in his eagerness to be up and away that he could walk as well as anybody, the blessed babe took to all fours and scrambled over the turf like an infant angel whose wings are scarce unfolded.

But it was true nevertheless that Edmund was going on a journey. He was going to Norwich Town in Connecticut, to pay his uncle, Deacon James Stedman, a visit — his mother said; and she told him that there were many kinsmen

34 A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

of his in his uncle's house; his cousins Charles and Tom, grown lads who would be big brothers to him; and Ferdinand, who was ten, — nearly twice as old as he! — and who had hair not unlike his and eyes a little like his but not so deep a blue; besides, there were his girl-cousins, Mary, Jerusha, and gentle Annie; and his excellent Aunt Abbie, and his kind Aunt Eunice, his Uncle James's wife; and the hired man, Jeremiah.

There were brooks at Norwich Town and fish in the brooks; there were trees to climb, and nuts to gather; there were cows and dogs and horses. Mother herself had lived in Norwich, in a square, brown house with great elms before it, on the plain at a place called Beanhill. This was once upon a time when her father, his Grandfather Dodge, lost much money and retired from New York City till he should have rebuilt his fortune. So Mother knew all about it, and she could give him her word that in the Stedman homestead it was like a party all the time — there were so many folk. And to a little lad, the geese and pigs and horses would be as fine as a county fair.

"And now, my darling," said his mother, "there are two thoughts which I wish you to think of every morning and every night and all day long. It is Mother's prayer for you and her hope and expectation that you will be a student and a scholar, that you will love books and all that is beautiful, that you will be a poet. But stronger than her desire that you should be a poet is her desire that you should be a gentleman. When you are grown a little older, and perhaps an hour comes when you must choose between being courteous and considerate, and pursuing uninterrupted the book which you are reading or the task that you are at work upon, lay aside self and selfish aims; be a gentleman and gracious. *Noblesse oblige* shall be your motto. Edmund, say *Noblesse oblige*."

"No bless —"

"Oblige —"

"O-bleege," repeated Edmund.

"*Noblesse oblige* means all that Mother is telling you. Think first of others. When you have given your word, keep it. Place service before fame; honor before life; in everything *be kind*."

Such a gentleman was your father; be the son of that gentleman. And if you can follow too in the paths of your mother, love the beautiful and pursue it.

"Brush your teeth every morning; a clean mouth means a clean heart. Read what the world calls literature, even if you cannot understand it; and when you cannot understand the meaning of a passage, learn it by rote, and by the time that you have learned it, God will have told you what it means. When you play, play with all your might; and when you work, work with all your soul. Now what is it that Mother has been saying to you, my son?"

"I must be a gentleman," said Edmund sturdily.

"And what else?" She restrained him by holding fast his busy hands.

"I must wead."

"Read," said Mother in correction.

"R-read," repeated Edmund dutifully.

"Read what?"

But Edmund was eager to be gone to Norwich. He was ready to start at once — just as soon as

he could crowd into his pocket the bladeless jack-knife which was his dearest pride. He could not wait for the hour to come which had been fixed upon for the journey; he could not wait — until he learned that his mother was not going too. Then he began to have doubts, and his babyhood look of wistful questioning returned to trouble the deep pools of his eyes. And at the last, it took considerable coaxing on his mother's part, and a peremptory command from Grandfather Dodge to prevent him from climbing out the coach window. But the stage driver, a good sort of man, soon took the lad to sit beside him and going up the hill asked him if he would kindly hold the reins; and Edmund drove the horses and nodded like an old stager to passers along the route who doffed to him and smiled.

Off at five years old, and the world before him — on a Thursday of the summer of 1839!

IV

A TAVERN ON WHEELS

RIDING in a stagecoach was nothing short of traveling in a tavern on wheels. Once upon a time Edmund had been inside a tavern with his grandfather Dodge, so he knew all about taverns. Wayfarers were continually entering the stage and leaving it. The door was on the swing every time that there was a lull. But instead of a glass of ale, or a night's lodging, or a rasher of bacon that the traveler paid for, it was for an hour's lift or his passage to the next town. These chance passengers Edmund looked upon as transients; they were the one-night lodgers who sit around a tavern hearth to the exclusion of the boarding guests; they were the idlers who loiter around the door and are glad enough to step across the threshold for a minute's cheer and

for protection from the elements. They lent a diversion to the journey, but he did not consider them personages of importance — like himself. He was a through passenger, a person of consequence, a traveler whose fare meant a good deal to the company; he saw at once that he was not expected to give place or discommode himself when a chance traveler hove through the coach door, or a saunterer held up the stage with the call "Hey!" and the query, "All full inside?"

The farther little Edmund went, the bigger the world grew and the tinier he. Even the stage, that had seemed as roomy as a village when he first made its acquaintance, became merely one of countless stages when he reached his first stopping-place, and although it rattled and banged courageously against the cobble stones, and made as much of itself as it could, it was lost in the multitude of stage-wagons, drags, carts, and drays that closed in behind it and before it. Confusion piled upon confusion; noise upon noise; bigness upon bigness.

Whichever way Edmund turned, there were strangers. Strangers filled the streets. He would

not have believed there were so many people in the world whom he did not know. Presently strangers lifted him down from the stage. He rode in a railroad coach; then a stranger helped him into a horse car and told him he was in New York City. By nightfall, he had reached Brooklyn where he was to sup and sleep, and other strangers came down a flight of steps to greet him. They said, as if they had always known him, "Oh, this is little Edmund!" They were remarkably well informed. He could not tell who they were, and he would have felt abashed at his shortcomings, if he had not been stunned by the emptiness of it all. He seemed another little boy from the little boy who had romped a while back with his mother and talked so confidently.

Then came another spell of traveling in a coach, but the second day was so bewildering that after it was over he could remember it no more than he could remember the coming of his first tooth.

Following the second day's journey, he put up in Hartford where also the people seemed to

have heard of him. A noble, gray haired gentleman said, "Edmund, I am your grandfather Stedman." Edmund said, "I used to live in Hartford — when I was a young child." And his grandfather replied, "Oh, yes, I know." So Edmund was silent, since his grandfather appeared to know even more than his words disclosed.

The world now seemed running past him, and he alone stood still. Again he was in a stage, seated inside — he was too dazed to care now about the horses; he was seated beside a gentleman who had him in charge. Perhaps the gentleman had had him in charge all the way. Edmund could not tell; he could not remember that any one had had him in charge until then.

"Mr. Tracy," said the driver, pulling aside the curtain to look behind him into the coach at this gentleman, "the child is pretty young, and kinder peaked looking, although he is so pert. But them fragilous ones sometimes turn out as tough as biled owl!"

"Who is pretty young?" inquired Edmund. Then both the men laughed.

"Your wits aren't asleep, Buddie," replied the driver.

"He's tired to death," said the gentleman who was called Mr. Tracy, "or he wouldn't be this quiet — not by the accounts I've heard of him."

The driver twisted his reins around the whip-stock. The stage was wandering up a hill. There was little doing.

"Is that Norwich?" questioned Edmund, as the road crept out from a forest.

"Dear, no!" said Mr. Tracy, rousing from a nap. "Why, bless me, it's Colchester steeple! It can't be noonday!"

"It's past noonday," cried the driver, cracking his whip and squinting at the sun. "And it's high time we were in the town. Lor', I've been drowsing!"

Trees, fences, houses whirled by as if on runners; trees whisked past the windows as fast as palings on a fence; the driver kept his whip cracking to make up for the time that he had lost wool-gathering.

They baited at Colchester — ten minutes. Edmund, little five-year-old, thrust his hands

into his pockets and took a turn around the tavern yard like the rest of the men. Then off down the road with crack of the whip, and a Hurrah! The sun dropped lower.

Edmund was jolted to and fro as if he were a baby again and was once more in the arms of comfortable Susan. He fell asleep, and each time that he fell asleep, he woke up with a start and found a new place out of doors. The opening of a turnpike gate could hardly keep his lids alert. Cottage windows, lit by gold and rosy brightness, blinked and winked at him.

"Is this my Uncle James's house?" asked Edmund, when he could gather his wits together. The stage had come to a full stop, and Mr. Tracy was lifting him down.

"No, this is my house," said Mr. Tracy. "Your uncle lives three quarters of a mile farther down the road. But we will not be able to make the distance before sundown, so I shall have to take you in to spend the Sabbath with Mrs. Tracy and me. I never travel on Sunday; and if I were willing to travel on Sunday, the Judge, your uncle, would not suffer it."

Edmund was numb with weariness. He stumbled between the guiding borders of friendly box to the front stoop, and was soon asleep on Mr. Tracy's sofa. Of his Sabbath spent in Mr. Tracy's family he remembered no more than he remembered of his sojourn in New York. When the Sabbath was over, two young people came in a buggy for him. Mr. Tracy told him that they were his cousins, Tom and Annie. Edmund did not know who they were until he was told; indeed he had found no one anywhere so ignorant as he.

But Annie knew him, and she laughed prettily, and kissed him. She had the gentlest, most inviting smile. She had a sweet voice as well, and a firm, yet tender way of speaking that made Edmund quite content to be standing by her side. When the three, big Tom, little Annie, and he, were settled in the buggy, Annie put her arm around him, and whispered to him that she was so in fear of falling out, Tom drove like lickety-split, and she asked him if he minded if she held on to him for safety. Edmund told her that he did not mind at all.

Annie's eyes were the softest gray, and she had round teeth strewn between her lips like dew between the petals of a rosebud. However slightly she smiled, the pretty teeth seemed to smile too. She was tanned from running bare-headed in the wind and sun; and as they drove along — lickety-split! — the hair around her face lifted and fell as if it were out of breath with the pleasure of running on the keen air; her hair was neither curly like his mother's nor yet straight; it had a docile look as if it would lie whatever way she chose. But Tom was a hearty fellow, a typical young squire.

As they dashed past the Green all the girls cried after Tom, but he took it good-naturedly. He was aware that he was considered a great catch, and was neither conceited over it nor yet self-conscious. He was bluff, broad-shouldered and jovial, ready to kiss all the girls in the township, and in a dozen townships. And he had kissed all the girls, first and last, all save quiet Mary Hyde, so Jerry the hired man told Edmund, when he and Edmund were getting acquainted, not many hours later. Tom was ready to do

errands for the neighborhood; to break colts for the timid; he was out and away at three o'clock of a morning to follow the hounds, and abroad till an hour after curfew so long as he had a job that kept him stirring; else he would have fallen to sleep in spite of himself and snored as lustily as a man in his prime.

"There's Cousin Lucrece now!" exclaimed Tom, pointing with his whip.

A house stood where the road turned, shingled all-of-a-piece; it was the gray of a gray sky on a midsummer day, and was set in a wilderness of old-fashioned flowers, on a knoll of green that dropped down the hollow into the brook which Tom had just crossed.

"Is that your house?" inquired Edmund. His uncle's house was beginning to seem as far off as the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

"That ramshackled, crazy old patch!" cried Tom. "No, indeed! That's Betty Darben's house, bless my bonnet! — we keep Cousin Lucrece out of the workhouse, and Cousin Lucrece keeps Betty out. They're both as queer as Dick's hatband!"

Edmund did not know who Dick was, but held his peace. He did not like to appear an ignoramus before his stalwart cousin. "I think the garden is real pretty," he commented, surveying the fragrant tangle from under his long lashes.

"I think so too," cried Annie, smiling down on him.

"Are we going to bait here?" Edmund asked the instant after. The mare of her own accord had turned into a sort of courtyard that ran along the road, opposite Betty Darben's. At the end of the courtyard toward Betty's was a building like a shop, set in front of a goodly barn; at the farther end of the courtyard was a large, many-windowed, many-chimneyed house, and connecting the house and barn stretched a company of united outhouses, one and a half story buildings studded with windows and doors. The whole group was painted and kept up like one house. It was as large or larger than any inn Edmund had yet visited.

"This is home!" said Annie.

"I did not know it," observed Edmund.

"You cherub!" Annie exclaimed, and then

48 A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

leaning forward called lightly, "Father, Father, little Ned is here!"

The shop door opened, and an unkempt fellow in blue homespun caked with mire, and with his brawny throat bare, shambled into the yard.

"Jerry, this is Edmund!" announced Annie.

"I know it," replied Jerry laconically, and began unharnessing the mare.

Even Jerry, the man-of-all-work, knew him!

Then down the kitchen steps came a boy of twelve, and after him, Aunt Eunice, and behind Aunt Eunice, Aunt Abby, and then another lad, and a young lady, and another, and a farmhand. Soon there were as many people in the courtyard as there had been in the stage. Tom sprang out of the buggy; he scarcely touched Annie by one hand, and presto! she was on the ground, holding up her lithe, slight arms to Edmund, and smiling on him still with her inviting smile.

"Annie, put that child down! It will never do to make a baby of him!" cried Aunt Abby.

Annie put Edmund down, but she kept his hand in hers.

"Annie," said Aunt Abby again, "run in and look to the bread; and Tom, your father wishes you to do some copying for him just as soon as you can. Edmund, I am your Aunt Abby, your Uncle James's wife's sister, your Uncle James's sister-in-law. Your Aunt Eunice — this is your Aunt Eunice — will show you to your room. The rest of your cousins will be home in a while, and one of them will take you around the grounds. And of course you shall go along to school with them. You must be up and learning."

Edmund was confounded by his excess of relatives. He had kept his head until it came to his Uncle James's wife's sister! — at that point his wits seemed to topple over like a spun-out top.

Already he had forgotten which of the ladies was his excellent Aunt Eunice who was to show him to his room. It was distressing. Surrounded by relatives, he took his way over the granite stepping-stones to the door. In the doorway, he was met by a portly, keen-eyed gentleman in fleckless black.

As the gentleman did not speak, Edmund extended his hand. "I am glad to see you," he said by way of salutation.

"The child has his father's ways, but he has the Stuart looks," said the gentleman, while his eye glanced over Edmund's head to the ladies. Then he engulfed Edmund's hand and wrist in his calm hand. "Edmund," he replied, "I shall be glad to see you too if as I trust you grow to be a good boy and strive to improve your time."

Edmund's eyes followed a strand of blue that ran in and out of the homemade carpet. His mother's eyes were blue.

"He seems to be a very quiet child," commented Aunt Eunice.

"Quiet for a boy," added Aunt Abby.

Edmund had never before heard himself called a quiet little boy. But he did not heed the surprising words; he was gazing toward the kitchen door. The door stood ajar and half disclosed a pump and sink. He looked up at his stately, magisterially-froked uncle as if he were pleading his own case. Then his eyes fell to the strand of blue. He was gathering courage.

"May I brush my teeth, please?" he asked swiftly. "I am very sorry to trouble you, but you see I promised my mother that I would brush them every morning, and I haven't done it yet!"

Instantly from the kitchen rang Annie's laughter and her heartening call. "Of course you may brush them; you just come out here to me."

V

THE HURRYING WORLD

DURING the whole of the first year in Norwich Town, it seemed to little Edmund as if he were still in the stagecoach, — traveling — traveling, — so continuous were the new scenes, new people, new ways. Not only were there his relatives in the Stedman homestead, but there were kinsmen all around town, and no sooner did he grow wonted to one group than a fresh clan, with half familiar features, mingled among the faces that he knew, and there he was again! — unable to tell Cousin Lucrece from somebody's else Cousin Lucretia, and with the wayside loafers laughing at him because when Tom called "Good morning, uncle!" to old John, the wood chopper, he called "Good morning, Uncle John!"

Folk were coming and going at his uncle's house. Folk were coming and going along the

village streets. Folk were coming and going even at the burying-ground, while he stood idly, but never now surprised.

He made the remark to Deacon Stedman that the burying-ground was very convenient! All the gardens behind the houses ran down to the burying-ground. Between the houses were more gardens, and if he wandered through a gate to peer at the flowers, or to sniff at a hyacinth on a window ledge, whether he lifted his eyes or let them fall, there were the soft gray stones with the quiet sunlight brightening them, and the mounds that made a daisied stairway down the slope — that silent slope where baby feet so often stumbled and where the bravest man, however dauntless, gave up the fight at last and, lying down, let Nature have her will of him.

If Edmund followed the brook, he came to the burying-ground. If he lost his way, he found it by going into the burying-ground. The brook and the burying-ground — they were his friends. They were always the same, and yet never the same.

He did not puzzle it out. He lay on the stone

54 A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

footbridge in the summer, watching a trout that was two inches long. He trudged along the mirrory path of crested ice in winter, while the brook purred and sang to him — all frozen save its voice ! The brook and the burying-ground were his friends, however the season disguised them. If it rained too hard, he could creep under Frances Whiting's gravestone that stood on six legs like a table, or under the twin roofs of the Halsteads', and make believe that he was in a house of his own. When spring lay hazelike on the hillside, he sat on an out-of-the-way, blossoming mound and practised mumblety-peg with his knife that did not have a blade. Or he chased a particular red squirrel, scampering and scrambling over hillocks and leaf-filled shallows, while Master Squirrel leaped merrily along the cypresses toward neighbor Spalding's orchard.

Sometimes the big boys came on a Saturday half-holiday and sat in a circle under the willow beside the Huntington sepulchre, and Edmund in the midst of them. The stories you have read of Captain Kidd are nothing to the stories they told of the doings in the graveyard, while

Edmund, wide-eyed, listened. The tigers in the bower of Eden were agreeable messmates in comparison with the sheeted dead who left the burying-ground tenantless whenever their spirit moved them. Such ghosts as there were at Norwich Town were enough to unwring the withers of the parson himself. Sometimes too the boys glanced at him and winked at one another, and then their accounts waxed intimate beyond belief — to frighten little Edmund into running away, or into a fit of terror. But he stood his ground, munching a wisp of grass after the manner of the loungers in Fuller's store, and thriftless of the throbbing heart that beat against his pinafore as if with pinions; and having learned to spit, he spat right manfully. And neither was he much afraid, being of too fine a mettle, as you shall hear a little later on.

The ghosts also were like wayfarers along the highway of the sixth summer of his life. In the evening they were around him; but in the morning they were gone — gone like Betty Darben, who when he went to school, he saw hanging in her window, with her blackened face

settling against the panes. In the morning she was there, but at noontime, when he ran out of his way to have another look at her, nothing was to be seen except an old woman who stood in the doorway and, plucking him by the sleeve, asked him if he would like to go with her and see the corpse. If gentle Annie had asked him to go anywhere, he would have gone ; but he did not like the old woman, so he said, "No — I thank you," and sauntered off, with the air of a youth who can see a corpse any day that he pleases. After he passed the house, he began to feel that he had been impolite. His mother had told him that he must receive graciously whatever was offered him ; she had told him, "*Gently takes the gentleman what oft the clown will scorn.*" He had heard her say to one who brought her roses, "I shall never see a rose that I will not remember you." He went back to the doorway. "You are very kind," he said ; "I thank you very much. I shall never see a corpse that I will not think of you !"

But the big boys frightened themselves. They started up in alarm if a broken bough sighed to

its fellow ; and when a loosened plank in the sepulchre door was lifted by the fingers of the wind, their faces became one piece with Elijah Leach's white marble headstone ; and Joe Sterry spied behind him fearfully, — just as though the hand of a dead Huntington had stirred that creaking plank.

"I'm not scart, Tom Harland !" Joe Sterry cried before he was accused.

"Well, if you aren't scart, I dare you to go into the vault and look General Jed in the eye," Tom Harland retorted, glad to cover his own confusion.

"When I feel like going in, I'll go in, without being dast by you or anybody like you," Joe answered grandly ; and Tom, followed by the whole quaking pack of them, betook himself across-lots home.

They did not dare little Edmund to make the round of those ancient coffins whose lids were reputed to be fallen in. Edmund was less to them than one of themselves ; he was their junior.

All of each week day, save Saturday afternoon,

Edmund went to a dame's school kept by Mrs. Lathrop, — not much to his mortification, since at the time that he entered it he did not know what a dame was. Mrs. Lathrop's house was the second from the corner west from the Ladies Huntington, and nearly opposite the Burying-ground Lane. School was held in the north front room; the south back room was the kitchen, and the kitchen served as a recess ground in bad weather. It was at Mrs. Lathrop's that his shame at having to wear a pinafore began. Aunt Abby provided the pinafore to spare the wear on his breeches. At first he was rather proud of his pinafore, and he lifted it grandly like the skirt of a coat when he sat down; but after a week at school, he felt that he was a girl in it. Often he took it off on his way to school and hid it in the Burying-ground Lane, and on his homeward way was forced to put it on hindside foremost, since only so could he button it. He was a funny little apparition when he came forth into the sunlight after one of these labors and strolled nonchalantly past the Spalding house, with his elbows crooked

behind him to accommodate the set of his sleeves.

But it was pleasant going to school to Mrs. Lathrop. From the kitchen drifted whiffs of Shrewsbury drops a-baking. Mrs. Lathrop's hands were often as mealy as a miller's, and her blushful nose shone through an aureole of flour; she breathed of goodies. And just at the hard parts of the lessons, she would be minded of her gingerbread or biscuits, and out she would speed to the oven to try them. Then, if her pans were a success, she was too pleased with herself to find fault with little lads and lassies; and if her pans were scorched or backward, she would lay aside the lesson for a time in order to give her undivided mind to matters more important.

In winter Edinund, together with the other boys and girls, would slide down hill on the driveway during recess, a sorry slope, a mole-ridge on a grass plot. But when you are sliding prone for the first time in your life, even a moderate decline satisfies for the hour at least, while a thank-you-marm, if only a protuberant cobblestone, is a sensation. When a melting day

60 A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

came, the children played soldiers, and in less time than I need to tell it, Edmund was made captain.

Mrs. Lathrop, kind, impartial, looked on from the window where she was rolling out caraway seed cookies. Presently she stepped to the doorsill.

"Edmund!" she called.

The juvenile battalion halted, Edmund at the head, radiant.

"My dear," said the schoolma'am mildly, "you were captain all through the recess, yesterday. My dear, you are the tiniest scholar of us all. Don't you think that it would be courteous to let some one else be captain?"

The quivering little frame, moist with energy and enterprise, fronted her squarely. The shining eyes fixed on her serious eyes, intent on their meaning.

Could it be that he was taking more than his share?

"They all may be captains!" he cried generously; "every one of them may be a captain!" He scanned his disintegrating forces. Leader-

ship was necessary to hold the troop in form. He saw it, and added, "And I'll be the general!"

How he came to lose his half-holidays was through having to go to Saturday afternoon school to Miss Sally Goodell who lived directly across the road from Sentry Hill, under the Harland windows. I very much fear that the little lad was "into everything" just as his aunts declared, and that they wished to be sure of his whereabouts. "Other children will sit still and behave themselves," his Aunt Eunice used to say, as if behaving were an amusement in itself; "but Edmund must be up and doing, every blessed minute."

Besides learning to sew a seam, he learned to work a sampler as nicely as a girl.


"Did you not take up more than two threads?" questioned Miss Sally, glancing from the seam into his anxious, praise-expectant face. "The stitches look a trifle coarse."

"If you take off your spectacles, I think they will look smaller!" explained the little scholar.

Gratuitously and unsolicited, he fashioned a nest of fresh grass for the silver bird that oblig-

ingly held Miss Sally's cloth for her in its tiny beak. But when he was trying to make the bird sit down, along came Miss Sally and tapped him so smartly on the forehead with her thimble that it made the tears start; then she pinned him to her apron, where he stood, while the foolish bird, now empty-mouthed as it was empty-eyed, continued to *set* in mid-air.

In manhood, he still could remember having been taken in extreme childhood to a school-master in the basement of a church; he could remember dimly, as in a dream, the gravestone-shaped, receding windows, and how he sat in one of them, with a tin cup tied around his neck by way of augmenting his disgrace. Unaware what wrong he had done and seraphically indifferent to the covert gibes of the righteous, he continued to sit the afternoon out precisely as he was placed, mildly meditative and innocently brooding over the school. But whether this was in Norwich, or whether I have confused his earliest memories of Norwich with the fargone days in Plainfield, when he went to school to Mr. Davidson and Mr. Wallace, I cannot say. Pos-



sibly the church school was a stepping-stone to Mrs. Lathrop's, just as Mrs. Lathrop's was a stepping-stone to the brick schoolhouse on the Green. Possibly he was withdrawn from the down-town school because it always took him so long to travel to the Landing.

There was much business for little Edmund to attend to *en route*. Of course, if he had an apple, he had to stop to give a bite of it to Mr. Coit's heifer, reaching through to the stone wall and calling, "So, bos! so, bos!" or coaxing, "I won't hurt you!" if she did not come at once. He had to kick pebbles from the footbridge, where to-day the Hospital stands, into the brook; that was a *devoir* he seldom failed of. And just before he came to the Stocking Mill, he stopped at Leffingwell Row to whistle to a canary that hung in the sun from a doorway. He loved that little bird. He could not see it, — not when he stood underneath the cage, — but he stood underneath the cage nevertheless and chirruped self-forgetingly until the blithe responses answered, or a burst of golden melody rained down upon his head. Last of all, he came to a halt in front of

Mr. Bliss's front gate, and with his nose thrust through the palings waited for brown-eyed Betsy to appear. He had heard it said that Tom was waiting on Betsy, and he thought that he would wait on her too. When she came in sight, he called solemnly, "Heigho!" To this Betsy replied, "Heigho!" after which interchange of greetings, he resumed his journey to school, running till he was out of breath. The Matthews gateway marked the last of his stop-overs, unless it happened that a passer-by spoke kindly to him, when he stood quite still, delighting in affection!—poor little dog, with his innocent, grave eyes uplifted, and with a bright glow coming and going, breathlike, on his cheek.

But it was in the brick schoolhouse on the Green that Edmund's true school days began. The brick schoolhouse was made of one square room, with a long hallway at the eastern end, and was ruled by the Reverend Doctor Gulliver, a good and kind man. The schoolroom had windows on three walls, with desks stretching along the walls under the windows and with a running bench facing the desks. In the middle

of the room was a platform for the Reverend Schoolmaster. When I first saw the brick school-house, there were half a dozen heavy nails driven into the plaster, and upon the staunchest of them reclined a large horsewhip painted white, — to inspire pallor, I suppose. How my school teacher, Miss Dustin, applied its five-foot, six-inch length, holding at the same time her blubbering offender by the scruff of the neck, — or by the ear! — I cannot now understand, but she did so manage, and applied it in the anteroom — the hall. And through the anteroom's closed door came the sound of the griping snarl of the lash, followed by the uproarious sobbing of the victim. Thrashings in those days were conducted behind locked doors; and the howls, the scuffings on the bare boards, the thuds against the wall, the chance overturning of the waterbucket, the two-steps and agonized prancings — while the whip curled around the coat pegs — were a lesson to inspire the unwhipped boy with awful caution.

The pegs along the anteroom walls held the youngsters' caps and cloaks. The tin dinner pail stood in place under its respective owner's

wearabouts, provided the distance were too great and the child too tender to make the noon trip home. Midway along the line, beaded and beery-brown, drowsed the wooden water pail. If the afternoon was hot and humid, Reverend Gulliver honored the largest scholar by detailing him to fetch the water pail into the schoolroom, and the masculine Hebe, walking decorously beside the bench, dispensed drinks, while each successive urchin drank more laboriously, with gaze that drifted around the schoolroom over the top of the rust-bearded dipper.

And Edmund drank with the rest, — drank artlessly and endlessly, leaving off now and then to give way to a gasp of exhausted content, yet holding tight to the handle of the pail to signify that his thirst was still unquenched, until Doctor Gulliver called sharply, “Ned Stedman, that will do; don’t you know when you have had enough?”

The day was without a pause for Edmund. Time did not fold its wings for him. He was hurried from one task to another. He was always on the road or at lessons. From week’s end to

week's end, he did not have an hour save at twilight, or as he snatched it piecemeal from the noon. Five o'clock until seven of a morning was an established hour for study. Miss Louise, who advertised to teach young ladies, could not put up with a pupil who was tardy — at five A.M.

“What!” she said to a laggard and looked truly grieved while she said it, “can you not reach school at five o'clock? — at a quarter before five even, thus to have time to hang up your cloak tidily and compose your mind? My child, I fear you are a sluggard!” And she said “sluggard” so reluctantly and so sadly that the delinquent lass laid down her head on the desk and, despairing of herself for earth and eternity, wept.

Edmund was as busily occupied as when he was in the stagecoach staring at strange sights until his eyes burned; and he did not suspect that the bustle and hurry, the going unknissed to bed in a house where he felt more and more a sojourner, the being pushed from pillow to post, would not come to an end. Without thinking it out for himself, the Puritan thrift of time

68 A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

and pence and affection seemed to him a part of the wearisome journey, — a journey that would end in the arms that he longed for. No one had told him that he was never to go back to live with his mother, — never, never again !

VI

FROM SUNDOWN TO SUNDOWN

SUNDAY begins less early nowadays than it began in Norwich Town a century ago. In Edmund's boyhood, the day began at sundown on Saturday, and as it approached, it cast its shadow before.

Aunt Abby was mistress of the tub, and into the tub the boys went, each in turn, and unless they soaped and scoured and scrubbed themselves from top to toe, Aunt Abby tried a hand at them, and when she turned an ear inside out there was something to show for it, or she kept at her diggings until she was rewarded for the pains she took and gave, and could hold up the washcloth triumphantly and cry, "There! Look at it! Did you ever see such dirt?"

"It's live skin," protested Edmund with the

earnestness of conviction ; and perhaps he was right.

Whew ! But how cold it was on a wintry day, when he stepped steaming out of the tub to the wet chilly floor of the washroom. How draughty the air became ! Unless the tanned, small hands rubbed fast and hard and succeeded in keeping ahead of the cold, — in getting the little beaded legs dry before they grew blue and the fair skin puckered into goose flesh, how suddenly was the air torn into a thousand shreds of sharp-breathed gusts and puffs !

Edmund was ecstatic in the tub. In spite of cold, or more chilling admonition, his spirits were continually breaking bounds. He hit upon so many topics of lively interest, he lost his footing so often and nearly fell, only to shout aloud in the excitement of his prowess at catching himself in time, or he fell prone with so mighty a whack that his aunt shut the door to deprive him of an audience. Yet his sudden plunges and splashings, his frenzied dives through steam and sud to recover lost possessions, brought back the boys to the keyhole as often as they left it.

At the outset, Aunt Abby looked him over to divest him of possible playthings, and in much sweetness and docility he yielded up a mine of treasures; yet notwithstanding his good intentions and her care, he seemed able to pick up limitless articles in the water. She had locked him alone in the washroom one evening, and stood outside the door, and prayed for grace. She had told him to soap himself. For a brief time there was a sound of tremendous activity. Then silence.

"Edmund!"

Silence.

"Edmund!"

Sepulchral silence. Not even the trickle of suds.

She unlocked the door and entered.

No Edmund.

It was impossible for him to get out of the room. But the impossible was nothing to Edmund. Aunt Abby's nerves were already unstrung. Trembling, she reached her hand down into the frothy water.

"*Squeak!*"

She did not stop to consider or ruminate. Staid as she was, she jumped like a heifer.

He had left the tub altogether as being a place not propitious for showing his person to advantage. He stood behind the door, straight as Apollo, proud as Lucifer, happy as a host of carolling angels; he had soaped himself; he had raised an unbelievable lather; he was as white as the sheeted dead to his very chin.

She was ready to drop. She stood, shaking from head to foot. It was at that instant that all of his zestful delight died in a cry of alarm.

"You are stepping on my snake!"

She lifted her foot quickly! Her next step was backwards into the hall. He could hear her breathe as if she had been running. "James!" he heard her call to his uncle in a strange, hard voice.

Edmund stood transfixed with fear. He presented a field for birch unparalleled in his experience. He heard his uncle's step, and he heard his aunt say sharply, "It is Edmund — he has a snake — in the washroom."

The deacon did not enter, but stood outside. "Where is your snake?" he demanded, looking down at the shivering little ghost.

Edmund, white as if clad, faced him eagerly. "It is right here, Sir, here in my hands." He opened his hands with exceeding caution. "It is a horsehair snake, Sir. Jerry said that if I kept a hair from a horse's tail in water long enough, it would turn into a snake. I was afraid that the soap would hurt its eyes, so I laid it on the floor. Aunt Abby stood right on it. I guess she's killed it," he added, with a plaintive little choke. "It's all I had to play with that's alive, and it isn't truly alive yet!"

Aunt Abby's chagrin mounted even higher than her nervous wrath. "Look at him, James," she cried; "look at him!"

"What have you been doing with yourself?" demanded the deacon.

The child's invisible innocence was suddenly made visible and fixed like frost on a pane. "Aunt Abby told me to soap myself all over, Sir," he said earnestly. "She told me to do it just as well as I could."

"Abby, did you tell Edmund to soap himself all over?" questioned the deacon.

"I did."

The deacon's face remained stern, but there was a whimsical leisureliness in his tone as he inquired, "Does Edmund seem to you to have been disobedient, Abby?"

"He never behaves!" she cried, sick with exasperation.

"Edmund," said his uncle, "if you do not know how to behave, get into the tub and go to bed."

Edmund's face became anxious. "Go to bed in the tub?" he asked.

"Get into the tub — rinse the soap — dry yourself — and go to bed in your bed," said Deacon Stedman.

Edmund heaved a sigh of relief. He had to go to bed in any case.

As a rule, the tubbings began early, but whether they came late or soon, there were the boots to be blackened, — nearly a score of pairs set along the hearthstone in a crescent, with a stool at one side, and the pot of beeswax and lampblack, — the leading make of polish in Norwich Town in

1848. Each child must polish his own foot gear, and Edmund polished his brass-stubbed, diminutively masculine boots till he could see his nose in them; polished them till even his placid Aunt Eunice lost all patience, and taking up Aunt Abby's plaint cried, "Edmund, stop that; stop, this minute! If you don't know when to leave off, you would better go to bed! I never saw such a child!"

Edmund was always having to go to bed.

No romping was allowed in the bedroom, and no light, except the ray from the candle in the hall. At bedtime, Edmund sat on the edge of the brown, quilt-covered bed, and kicked till his boots came off; then, lying back, he kicked till his funny brown breeches fell in a heap. Then, pushing his stockings partly free by way of encouragement, he kicked and kicked. It took a long time and a deal of kicking for the pair to part company with his heels, but when at length they did, they shot up to the ceiling and dropped down where they pleased. Then Edmund dived into bed, dragging his red flannel nightgown after him, all ready for the nocturnal fight with

his bedfellow over the debatable middle of the bed.

"Edmund, have you said your prayers?" came his Aunt Eunice's voice from the entry.

"I am saying them now," responded Edmund in a tone that rebuked conversation.

It was a pretty sight on the first winter's night of the season to see the little fellows — there were no less than six of them nigh of an age; three pairs of brothers sent like Edmund to the deacon to be educated, Hunt and Turville Adams, Emilie and Virgilio Lasaga, Edmund and little Charlie — standing in the red firelight in their red flannel gowns, while Aunt Abby stood at one side looking them over to see if the new gowns were too large, or the last year's gowns too small. Uncle James too came in and gave his opinion with a legal, professional precision that made a too large gown look small, and a too small gown swell with pride at being noticed by him.

The boots were blackened before the tubbing, and before the boots were blackened, the fresh clothes were brought forth from the linen press and laid in orderly piles for the morning. There

was no work on the Lord's day; the Lord's day was work enough.

The Saturday supper savored of Sunday. No trivial speech was indulged in; sound seemed sacrilege. Deacon Stedman did not speak, save to remark to Aunt Eunice, when she was pouring his tea, "Only up to the blue, Eunice, up to the blue!" He was temperate in all things. After supper, the household assembled in the parlor, and when they were settled, Judge Stedman (you remember that he was a judge as well as a deacon) read a chapter from Holy Writ. Then, standing with his chair before him and with his hand on the top of it, he began solemnly and slowly, after the manner of the good Judge Noyes, to tell the story of the Creation, the Fall, the Expulsion from Eden, the wickedness of man, the Flood, God's covenant with Noah, with Abraham, with David, the final and supreme scene of the Redemption. He warmed more and more to the subject; he grasped his chair with both hands; he rapped it on the floor; at last, when he came to the Death of Him whom cruel men crowned with thorns and nailed upon a cross,

he thrust back the chair from him against the wall with a feeling violence that made the windows shake.

And after Saturday — the Sabbath !

Hot baked pork and beans, hot steamed brown bread, and apple sauce were the Saturday night's customary supper ; cold pork and beans, cold bread, cold apple sauce, the Sunday breakfast ; roast sparerib cold and cold vegetables were the usual Sunday dinner. In godly families no cooking whatever was done on the Sabbath ; warmed-over beans and bread made the Monday breakfast. Church worship started off with the ten o'clock morning service which lasted till twelve ; then came Sunday school till one. Country folk brought lunch with them and ate it circumspectly under the trees behind the meetinghouse. The afternoon service began at two o'clock and continued until four. Even young children were expected to sit through all the services, and if Edmund felt a trifle languid from an excess of beans and Bible, his Aunt Abby glanced askance at him, and the whisper went from elder to elder, "H'm — another of his Sunday headaches !"

I used to have the Sunday headache myself, and I know what it is. I used to stare idly into the gallery at the orphanage children sitting outlined against the blue of the outer sky, like charity angels; and then my eyes would wander through the clean-paned windows, and I would watch the beautiful, brave trees with their hands held up to God. But when I wearied, a loving arm that made of itself a pillow slipped around me, and I both laid me down and slept and waked again and did not fear, no, not all the deacons in the world nor yet the stiff looks of a spinster who wore corkscrew curls dyed black, — she wears them now! — for it was my mother's arm that held me; and my mother was my house of defense, my city of refuge.

The meetinghouse, as it used to be, had a round dome of a sounding board swung in the middle of it. Clustered columns supporting the galleries expanded into Gothic arches. The pews were square, with seats around two sides, and in the center stood an armed chair for the patriarch of the family. Edmund's aunts had wooden and brass foot stoves, and Edmund and the other

children sat around on stools on the floor. Of course he could not see anything when he was seated, but he could hear and he did not lack for opportunity to listen. The pulpit was high against the ceiling and was reached by a winding staircase, narrow as Jacob's ladder.

The Reverend Parson preached according to precedent. He was not to be outdone by any predecessor, however long under the sod, or however long-winded; he preached for the best part of an hour by the glass under the pulpit, and into his prayer he condensed all the news of the week — public, town, village, and foreign events. So specific and so particular were his supplications and thanksgivings that his congregation listened to the latest and most trustworthy bulletin of affairs at home and abroad. The long prayer was of great interest to the "elderlies", especially to the countryfolk of outlying districts who rarely saw a current newspaper; but to little Edmund, the parson's peregrinations latitudinally from the Norwich Landing to the Ganges were indifferently dull, and his peregrinations longitudinally from earth to heaven little better,

when they stopped short of hell. Hell was somewhat interesting, but even the doings in the nether world lost their fascination through familiarity.

So Edmund amused himself by sitting farther and farther back on his cushionless four-footed stool. He observed that by spreading his legs wide apart the space between his knees was like the letter V. Soon he evolved a little game of his own. First he made the V's smaller and smaller; then he went to the other extreme and made the V's larger and larger — till he sat back beyond the limit of balance when, without warning, up went the legs of the footstool, and over he and the bench went together with such a thud of his head on the floor and with such a clatter of the bench against the bare boards that our parson, the terror of Sabbath breakers, came to a full stop. It sounded as if at least the gallery were falling! Edmund, in his zeal to mend the matter, scrambled from under the pew where he had been shot, and not stopping to set the bench right side up, or not observing that it was topsy-turvy, sat himself down on it with so absolute an abandon that he stuck fast; and not till his uncle grasped

82 A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

him by the collar and lifting him and his stool in mid-air, shook him, did he and his seat dissolve partnership. And when they did dissolve it, there was a second crash — more awful than the first.

In Edmund's boyhood, Mr. Stevens who lived near the path into the burial ground was choir master, and he trained his choir martially. There was no falling behind in time. The singers came down on each beat with a rhythmic regularity that threatened to undo the meeting-house, and when a hymn was under way the hills around the Green resounded. The congregation caught the infection of the heartiness and sang with might and main. There were twenty-five men and twenty-five women in the choir proper; — trebles, basses, *seconds*, and altos, stationed decorously with the men on one side of the gallery and the women on the other side. They sang through their noses and they carried it to the point that it was an art. The women managed the melody, and trilled and wailed and quavered; those who fell short in style were ranged as *seconds*; the basses sang *tum-tum*,

tum-tum,—their crescendos were terrific, their minuendos matchless; the altos soared off by themselves on a high scale of flats.

Mr. C. P. Huntington, the great-grandson of Washington's *aide-de-camp*, was as straight as an arrow in his nobility of breed. He had an Adam's apple that must have been the despair of all the Adam's apples in the county. During Mr. Huntington's participation in divine worship, Edmund's interest in watching the Adam's apple was undisguised. There was never an Adam's apple that had such a wonderful range. It worked up and down like a human pump-handle; it was always on time. It descended so low that to dream that it would rise again seemed hopeless; then, when all seemed lost, it reappeared, slowly, grandly, with a masterful steadiness that left no question that it could have gone on rising through eternity, if so it had pleased. Mr. Wolcott Huntington also was patrician. He was of a type that nature molds but once in centuries. But he was merely another object of pleasant scrutiny to Edmund. When Mr. Huntington sang, his ears, emulating his kinsman's Adam's

apple arose in their places, and his mighty shock of iron hair shook like Libanus in a storm.

Edmund was early assigned a place among the trebles on a bench in the gallery. He had a sweet, clear voice and could carry any tune he heard. All the lads affected to sing, and Edmund and his friends sat in a row together, — an arrangement which no doubt afforded unbounded delectation to the old Gentleman who runs a mischief-bureau for the idle.

Throughout the hour-long prayer, while the parson conducted the Almighty through India and the Sandwich Isles, Edmund was on a tour personally conducted by himself.

“There is no courser like a book to bear us miles
away,

Nor any chariot like a page of prancing poesy.”

Edmund possessed a darling volume of poetry, an old copy of Keats. Where it came from, how he came by it, I do not know; but it was his, and it was buttoned safe against his heart. And when the long prayer was well under way, when the congregation had no ear save for the news, when his own fair brow and fairer lids

.

made the gallery bar they leaned on warm, and he was bowed before the Being who had made him as he was, he drew out his book and read. He was no more sad or lonely, nor chilled by the winter's cold, nor faint with the summer's heat. Unearthly exulting joy awoke in his veins and sang to him.

And when the parson read again, passing from the largeness of utterance of Isaiah to the human tears and tenderness of "In my Father's house are many mansions," and his iron voice, which at will had risen to the grandeur of the prophet, now sank in despite of his will to the compassionating humanness of the Saviour of men, Edmund already in the spirit mounted on the twin wings of longing and need to the throne of the Eternal.

Incidentally Edmund picked up from the choristers bits of gossip not mentioned by the parson in his prayer. He learned for the first time that the girls of Bean Hill were without counterpart in the whole history and galaxy of beauty, and that the young men sitting behind him were in the habit of attending the midweek meetings in the basement of the Bean Hill Metho-

dist Church and beauing these charmers home. It was great sport — so they told him. Tom Harland spoke of the Backus sisters as devilish fine women. Cynthia Backus was fairly thirteen, and the downright vehemence with which Tom said the “devilish” stirred Edmund with a determination to slip out from the Stedman rooftree at the first opportunity. He made up his mind to beau one of these devilish fine women of twelve or fourteen; he would not hang around outside the church door, in the shadows of the elm trees, waiting for her to sally forth, the way the rest of the fellows did; he would wait boldly in the vestry and accost her as a gentleman should accost a lady. This was his covenant with himself on the subject of the Sex.

So Sunday ended, and Edmund, feeling all prayed out, said his prayers yet once again and went to bed.

VII

HARLAND HOUSE

IN Tom and Ed Harland's house on Sentry Hill, you can see the books before you mount the stairway. The walls are covered with them. The walls have not shown themselves for generations; the most that they can do is to squint through random spaces left by gadding volumes and, like spinsters around the Green who spy through tilted shutters, try to catch a glimpse of life. The ladies do not live; they look on life. But the books move and have a being. They warm to the touch of human hands; they answer to the gaze of human eyes; they are sought after, and loved, and taken on jaunts from attic to arbor. They share the hearthlight and the lamplight with the family; they enjoy intelligent companionship; they are brought forward to be intro-

duced to strangers; they accompany friendly personages home; they go visiting their neighbors.


A black walnut hand rail seems to run across the faces of the books on the upper landing, as if to guard them behind bars, but it is only the baluster, that turns when it reaches the top step and stretches out along the hall. Instead of shutting one off from the shelves, it shuts one in, and like a kind arm forms a comfortable back, if you sit on the floor and lean against its not too distant staves. Books, books, books from floor to ceiling, — they are the walls in Harland House.

Aside from its books, Harland House is a storied place, built as all the around-town houses were built, in the forenoon of the eighteenth century. If you walk from the front door to the street without keeping to the stone stairway, you reach the street, to be sure, but you will plunge headlong down sheer granite cliffs, and all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot put you together again. No Indian chieftain climbed to that house, I assure you, without losing his head before he had a chance to take to his heels. If you poke your nose out of a back-chamber

window, you find yourself in hanging gardens, so steep is the terraced slope on which the house has grown. Henry Harland of England built Sentry Hill. He made the finest clocks in the Colonies, and whoever wished to be up to time applied to Master Harland. You will find his name in books that tell of clocks.

Years later than the time of this story, Tom Harland, Edmund's playmate, married and had a son whom he named Henry after the old clock maker, and Edmund became the little Henry Harland's godfather and encouraged him to write. He wrote *Grey Roses*, *As it was Written*, *The Cardinal's Snuff Box*, and many other stories, and would have done still better work if that dread disease which lurks spiderlike in ancestral halls had not caught him in its web on the threshold of his manhood.

Harland House is indeed a storied house, and Norwich Town a storied town. The railroad from Petrograd to Moscow was engineered by a young man whose sister lived on the Sheepwalk to the Landing. His name was Whistler and his son was James McNeill Whistler, the artist. The famous



bridge across the Neva River in Russia was built by Captain Zenas Whiting, who lived in a tiny frame cottage on the hillside behind the old Brick Schoolhouse on the Norwich Town Green. Captain Whiting worked out by himself the problem of a suspension bridge, and in the security of his simple-hearted sincerity, unelated and undismayed, arose from his well-scrubbed deal table and crossed the seas to lend his brain to the destiny of a continent.

The bridge that he built was the first suspension bridge in the Old World ; it was a span between the night of despotism and the dawning of liberty. Fuller's Store was bequeathed to Mr. Fuller by his wife's kin, the Clevelands who founded Cleveland, Ohio ; Grover Cleveland, the silversmith's nephew, became our president. Little marvel that Mr. Fuller, who came of a line of schoolmasters, did not grow rich. Men of Norwich in those days were not in the world to grow rich. Character, not greenbacks, was the foundation of their houses. And although they have "fallen on sleep" they share not their graves with oblivion.

But this is not telling you of little Edmund. In the gloaming of a midsummer holiday, he was sitting on the floor in the upper landing of Harland House, reading. He had a book on his knees and a heap of books by his side. He could not read fast enough. His shining eyes darted from line to line, and his attentive forefinger ran along underneath the words to help him keep his place. He was full of business. His zeal ran away with his senses. He heard nothing, saw nothing, felt nothing beyond the magic of the page. It was thus, out of breath, hasting and exultant, that he happened upon Captain Marryat who sailed in the good ship *Beaver*. A dashing, fine gentleman Captain Marryat was. Edmund went back to the Stedman house convinced that there had never lived his like since time began. He dreamed of Captain Marryat. He talked to himself of Captain Marryat. He played that he was Captain Marryat. All of Captain Marryat's universe was contracted into the span of his unresting little brain.

Edmund was as fond of books as a water spaniel of a pool. He scented a library afar off

and knew the rounds of them. All through that long midsummer recess, he trotted from one door to another of homes where books abided. Gussie Green had parents who in turn had a library. There was a library in Mr. Daniel Coit's house, — besides pictures, prints, and curios. There were other libraries, twoscore of them, such as they were, but not all the libraries belonged to folk he patronized. He passed by on the other side when he came to a house where he felt that he was not wanted. But when he came to Tom and Ed Harland's house, or to Gussie's, or to Mr. Coit's, he slipped through the gate, and mounting the doorstep, stood at the threshold with his cap in his hand. If he laid hold of the Harland House knocker, it was just in his delight in being tall enough when a-tiptoe to reach it. Having stirred the great brazen S, he let it down in place noiselessly.

After patient waiting, if no one appeared, he tried the next house, and the next, and the next, until at last some kind mother espied him and called, "Is that you, little Ned? Come in!" And Edmund came in, flushing to the finger tips with joy, and with breath shortened for very eagerness.

He felt scant interest or curiosity in Deacon Stedman's books. Possibly he was never allowed to prospect upon the judge's property; there were so many young people under the Stedman roof that perhaps it would not do to give any one of them the freedom of the shelves. Or it may be that the deacon's library was made up of law books, books on theology, and untranslated classics.

"How is the deacon this morning?" was the greeting that met Edmund on his route. To which he invariably replied, "The judge is bearing up very well — I thank you." Sometimes he offered home items of interest uninvited, or in return for an apple or a Shrewsbury drop. If the gift was an apple, he turned it around as nimbly as a squirrel turns a nut and announced in his sprightly fashion, "It hasn't a speck in it! At our house we eat the specked apples first." And then, cocking his head like a canary, he would add, "And by the time we have eaten the specked ones, they all are specked!"

When Mrs. Huntington gave him a cookie, he broke it diligently into divers parts. Next he nibbled each piece in turn into a miniature

cake, and having finished his work, deposited the collection in his pocket. Mrs. Huntington looked on, over her needle.

"Don't you care for seed cookies, Edmund?" she inquired.

"Oh, yeth!" he answered, smiling radiantly at her in her simplicity, "but you see I like to have something to take home to the children!"

But if dancing-footed, rosy-lipped Gussie saw him at the gate, she flew to the door, and snatched him by the hand, and cried out, "Oh, come on in, Ned!" and Ned, glancing past her at the bookshelves, entered his desired Eden blissfully.

Gussie had a book of fairy tales, — The White Cat, Aladdin's Lamp, Puss in Boots, — it was the first book that Edmund read from cover to cover. Time after time he read the tales, and yet each time that he came to the end of one of them he gave way to a prodigious sigh of satisfaction. With so heavy odds against the hero, the happy-ever-afterwards ending always seemed an impossibility. He trembled for the White Cat lest she should fail to appear in time to entertain her rescuer; he trembled for the prince lest

he should turn back at the crucial hour. Rapt beyond time and place by his loving solicitude for the prospective lovers, he would whisper to the prince, "Go on — don't stop — it's all right — just go on a little farther." And to the White Cat he would murmur with the compassionating encouragement of an angel, "Don't cry, White Cat; he'll come back — he's coming back — right on the next page!" But this was when he was quite alone. When Gussie read the tales aloud to him, he sat motionless, with all his seething fears and hopes and sighs pent close and fast, and with his luminous deep eyes as big as saucers, until the final word was reached. And then he said, "Gussie, if it were not for Captain Marryat, I am sure that your book would be the finest book that ever was written."

If it were not for Captain Marryat! Edmund was loyal. Even the prince who won the White Cat could not make him faithless to the gallant captain. Yet although he would not admit it to Gussie, he knew in his own heart that if he were not already Captain Marryat, he would be the doughty prince.

VIII

CAPTAIN MARRYAT'S MANTLE

IN spite of pleasant books and of the long holidays of midsummer which let down the bars and set little Edmund loose in the pasture, life was not all Shrewsbury drops for him. Biding in his uncle's house still seemed a part of the journey that began with the stagecoach. He reached out in his dreams for his mother, but he did not cry. Why should he cry, when he need only wait? You see, he kept supposing that he was going to return.

And once — twice — the journey did promise to end. It was after this wise. By the time that Edmund had been in Norwich Town a whole year, he was of course a grown boy; and little Charlie, at home with Mother who was staying now in Newark, was no longer a baby. Charlie was four years old!

"Why, when Edmund was your age," cried pretty Elizabeth, lifting her Charlie's innocent face with her white hands, "he went to visit his Uncle James in Connecticut; he went quite by himself; he was considered a young man! What does my darling Charlie think of that? You mother's baby!"

But Charlie gazed simply at her. He did not understand this talk. He did not remember that he had a brother. He was a very lackwit when it came to worldly matters.

"Don't look at me so searchingly!" cried Elizabeth, rumpling his hair into a halo. "Don't you wish to go to Norwich Town? Don't you wish to have a nice journey?"

Charlie shook his head. He was content to stay right where he was.

"Wouldn't you like to see your big brother? Wouldn't you like to have Edmund come to see you?"

Charlie nodded. He was always quiet and docile; he had little to say. Speech for him was either nodding or shaking his head.

"Wouldn't you like Edmund to take you back

with him to make your kind Uncle James a visit?" questioned Elizabeth, coaxing. That was a happy idea — to have Edmund come for Charlie and take the little fellow to Norwich. It would give Edmund a bright holiday, and it would forestall possible reluctance on the baby's part.

So Edmund arrived a fortnight later, with bluff, hale Tom as overseer. The day, I think, was in the late summer of the year 1839. Before the coach drew up before his mother's gate, Edmund had seen her and was out of it. He was in her arms — sobbing — how he sobbed! — he sobbed enough for the bygone year. And afterwards, through all the dinner hour, he sat smiling blessedly at her through tears that would keep welling, — he, not heeding his plate, but reaching under the tablecloth to pat her hand — till Elizabeth, mindful of how in another day or two she was going to put a period to all this joy of his by sending him from her, burst into bitter weeping and had to leave the table. Then at the last, at the hour of parting, Tom was forced to lift him bodily, he clung to her so and wept so wildly, and even she reproached him, saying, "Dearest,

do you not know that I have no money? Do you not know that I am acting for your good?" — while Charlie, little weanēd angel, repeated without a sigh her Farewell and followed Tom as he was bidden.

The poplars that rose golden above his guardian's rooftree in Norwich Town and caught the setting sunlight were colorless as prison walls to Edmund, as he and Tom returned with little Charlie. Hope — hope — hope, the heart's ethereal sun, was slowly sinking beneath the horizon of his thoughts.

He shared his bed with Charlie now. Across the room stood a second bed in which slept Al and Hunt Adams. The Stedman manor seemed more than ever a house of wayfarers to Edmund. The inn seemed to have crept into his own little bedchamber. But Charlie did not appear to heed or comprehend. Charlie was a pattern child. Perhaps he was not lusty. Having a mother, he was motherless, and he had never known brother or father. Aunt Abby approved of him. "He sits still and behaves himself all day long," she remarked to Edmund, and gave Charlie a

gingerbread boy with currant eyes which she had made on purpose for him, and which was no more troublesome than he.

Underneath Edmund's window, — the boys' bedchamber was the southeast room on the ground floor, — stretched rows of box and plats of lavender, larkspur, and a host of flowers. The outer world was passing fair. Overhead in the noonday sky were other gardens, wide reaches of blue meadow land, where clouds like thistle-down were straying; and at night still wider stretches of limitless dim gardens, with uncounted stars for flowers and with bands of shining dust for paths.

Everywhere in the outer world there was space enough for thousands and thousands of little boys to run amid, — run amid and never be found. One night it came about that Edmund went to bed like Diddle-dee-dumpling, my son John, arrayed in his roundabouts. That was to save him the time of dressing at daybreak. At daybreak, he was climbing out of the window and running down the road in his green-checked pinafore. He ran as hard as he could run because

he was running away, and when boys ran away he supposed that they ran without stopping. He reached the wharves on the Thames at a little after five o'clock. A schooner swung at the farther dock. Supporting himself against a pile of timber leaned a bleared, bronzed, tipsy skipper dressed in the ministerial black of a swallow-tail coat and plug hat. Gold rings hung from his ears. He leered and lounged and accosted with genial good will even a truck of kegs which a deckhand was shifting.

"Are you a Sea Captain?" inquired an apparition at his knee.

"Right, sonny!" cried the skipper, "Captain Hudson of the *Ann and Emily* — neatest craft afloat — due to sail from this here port at five-thirty — precisely."

You may be sure that Edmund lost no time in telling the good-natured captain his story. He told him that his mother was a poor woman in Newark, a widow who took in washing for a living. And that he was on his way to help her. He said that he could work, although he was so little, and if Captain Hudson would give him a chance

to work his passage to New York, he would show him that he was not afraid of hardship. Captain Hudson was in a generous mood, so aboard they went, where Edmund entered his name in a clear, firm hand — Henry Wilson. Edmund used to say, in after years, it was singular that he took "Henry Wilson" for a name, inasmuch as when he did finally reach the great metropolis, a young man bearing the name "Henry Wilson" was one of his earliest associates.

After the anchor was weighed, Captain Hudson and Henry Wilson paced the deck.

"You walk better on the boat than you walk on the land," observed Henry Wilson. It was true. Captain Hudson, who had pawed the air now with one foot and now with the other when Henry was trying to help him locate the gang-plank, was as steady as Gibraltar the instant he walked the planks. "The Almighty made my legs to walk a deck," said the captain. "I can't seem to get used to terry firmy."

"Is *terry firmy* the gang plank?" inquired Edmund.

"Precisely," said the Captain.

A fog like rain closed them in. There was nothing to be seen fore or aft, or to port or starboard; there was nothing for the *Ann and Emily* to do but catch a breath when she could and feel her way along the channel. Henry and Captain Hudson stood side by side. Henry felt very much at home.

"Ain't you got no brothers and sisters, sonny?" inquired the Captain.

"Six brothers," said Henry. While he was having brothers, it occurred to him to have some sisters; so he added, "and six sisters. I am the oldest."

"Wal, I swan!" cried the captain. "I reckon some of them were triplets, warn't they?"

"Oh, they were all triplets," replied Henry. It seemed the proper thing to say.

"Your pa left your ma with her hands full; there's no gainsaying that."

"He couldn't help it," spoke up Henry earnestly. He had a suspicion that the captain might not think well of his father. "He truly couldn't," he repeated. "He died of a cussumption!"

"Wal!" ejaculated Captain Hudson. His bleared eyes narrowed. The twinkle at the corners of his lids faded into crow's feet. "I had a little sister," he said slowly, "pert as you be; and pretty? Lord! I'd have put my little Lizzie against the Queen of England; and she died of a cussumption too!"

They took a turn in silent sympathy.

"I wouldn't like to have rings in my ears," commented Henry in a moment. "But I think that it is much nicer to have rings in your ears than in your nose," he hastened to add, lest he seem to reflect unfavorably on the skipper's taste. "Bulls have rings in their noses. You can make a bull do anything — if you get him by the nose! We have a sow that has a ring in her snout. I think it is shocking. It is against Nature. God gave the sow her snout to root with for her young. My uncle told me that sows do not mind it. But I said, 'How do you know? Are you a sow?' 'Well,' said he, 'the bulls do not mind it.' And I said, 'Wouldn't you mind it, if you had a ring in your nose, and were made to walk along beside a cow which is Aunt Eunice,

because cows are ladies?' 'I have matters of importance to attend to,' said my uncle. 'That is what the bull thinks,' I said. 'When you know more, you will talk less,' said my uncle. My uncle says that I am a bad boy."

"A nice little nipper like you — a bad boy?" repeated the skipper. He patted the misty head. "Your uncle must be a rum one!"

Henry did not understand, but he was not to be outdone. He took pride in all his relatives and friends. He sprang like a trout to the fly. "Yes, he is," he said brightly; "and he's a deacon too."

"Lord Almighty —"

"Do you ever go to Conference Meeting?" inquired Henry. "I think you would enjoy listening to Deacon Sterry pray — he hems and haws so. But I don't think you would care for Deacon Hyde; he prays so easily. I think you are a very kind man, Captain Hudson; I think you would be a deacon if you lived on land. We pray a great deal at our house. We pray before each meal, and we pray mornings and nights, and when we go to bed we pray,

and we pray all day Sundays mostly. Do you pray?"

"Praying's a kind of a habit," commented Captain Hudson.

"I've heard you say 'Lord God' several times and then finish to yourself. When my uncle isn't home, we have silent prayer. I didn't say my prayers this morning. I forgot."

The skipper closed his eyes. Surrounded by Henry's reminiscences of his praying relations, he decided that silent prayer was the better part of valor.

Henry likewise closed his eyes. They sat, face to face, with lids screwed tight, and lips moving nimbly. Presently Henry said "Amen", and they both arose.

"Suppose we go below and have a snack," said the captain, and down they went, hand in hand.

The cook was hashing corned beef and cold potatoes. He served it in the chopping bowl in which it was chopped. The crew sat around a bare table. The first thrust at the hash was reserved for the captain, because of his rank; the crew followed suit. There were not knives enough

to go around, but Captain Hudson gave Henry a knife, because Henry was his guest. Captain Hudson left the fork to the bo'swain, and the bo'swain spiked the hash well enough by the help of thumb and forefinger. Henry noted that each seaman, when waiting for a chance at the dish, sat with his knife grasped midway between hilt and blade and with the hilt planted upright on the greasy boards; so he did likewise, bringing his knife down with a manly vigor that made the wood resound.

The half tipsy skipper, the sailors reeking of vile tobacco, the crude hash, the close air, and the foul steam of fog-wet tarpaulin, were a part of the play to Henry. He fell to with a will. He plied his knife as if he had been born with a blade in his mouth.

While breakfast was under way, the *Ann and Emily* ran her nose into the shoals near Huntington Works, two and a half miles down-stream; and on the shoals she stuck.

Nothing could be done but wait for the tide to flood. But Edmund — I mean Henry — did not mind lying by in the least. He was free,

and he was happy. It was so beautiful to be free. He paced the decks with his hands in his pockets. Under his mist-frosted hair, his color grew. To be free was more beautiful than anything in the world. To be out of doors in the wet and weather all by himself, and with none to call or chide him was the most wonderful happening, the most marvelous end that could possibly have come to his wearisome journey. He began to question how it was that he had never before run away. He might just as well have run away a hundred times. He told himself that it was the easiest thing in the world. All one had to do was to get up at dawn, and slip out, and run and run till one came to the river. And to think that he was going to his mother! That was the best of it all. He had been very stupid not to guess that of course his loved mother would have had him stay with her if she had had money enough; he had been very unkind not to think of it. He had been ungrateful to cry and cling to her, — as if she could help sending him to Norwich Town, — when she was acting for his good. Her kin in New Jersey might beat

.

him, but no one save she could drive him off again, and when she saw how he could earn his bread so that his board did not cost her a penny, she would let him live with her. He was certain of it. Besides working for his own lodging, he would work for her too. It was easy to earn one's living! Was he not earning his passage that very moment?

Now while Henry Wilson, as quiet as the *Ann and Emily* herself, lay waiting for the tide to turn, the orderly Stedman household was thoroughly upset.

"Where is Edmund?" asked his guardian. Not till the patriarch was closing the Bible at family prayers did he discover that his nephew was missing.

Aunt Eunice looked at Aunt Abby and Aunt Abby looked at Annie. No one knew. None of the mothers in Israel had missed him. Only the Adams boys sat stiff and straight; little Turville's eyes were fixed on space, and he was swallowing rapidly.

"Turville," said Deacon Stedman, "tell Edmund to come to me at once."

"I — I — can't, Sir —"

"Obey me instantly."

Turville wound up his hands in the hem of his jacket, and twisted his toes around the chair leg.

"He's runned away," he said weakly.

"Run away?" cried Deacon Stedman. "Why should he run away, I would like to know?"

His face paled. "Where did he run?" he questioned.

"To the Port, Sir. We were all going to run away, Sir, but we were scart, Sir."

"Scart!" repeated the deacon. "Scart of what?"

"Scart of you, Sir."

"Let us implore the Divine Blessing," said Deacon Stedman. But he left the room as soon as he said "Amen." He was in a state of mind, you may be sure. It would make a seven-days' scandal for him with his reputation of fatherly oversight to have his charges running away. He drove to the Landing without pausing for breath. At the wharves, he held up the first lounge.

"Halt!" he cried sharply. "Have you seen my nephew?"

"Don't know who your nephew is, Jedge," said the tar; "but if he is a right handsome gentlemanly little chap in a green tier, and as dern lively as old Gooseberry —"

"That's my nephew!" cried the deacon, thrashing with his cane among the kegs and timber as if to beat the boy out of cover.

"He sailed in the *Ann and Emily*, Captain Hudson master, at six o'clock this morning."

The deacon, clutching and puffing, clambered down into a skiff. "Overtake the *Ann and Emily*, and I'll pay you well," he said shortly.

"I'll row you, old gent; now don't you be anxious. We won't be long in overtaking her — not in this fog."

The skiff, loosed from her moorings, shot into the river.

Down-stream, at Huntington's Shoals, the rain was falling fast and fine. The rain was as pleasant as the mist. The mist had gathered on Henry's brow till it formed into frail fingers that stole softly down his cheek. But the raindrops pattered lightly on his eyelids like his mother's fingers tapping upon a pane. He had left off

thinking altogether, while listening to the long-drawn, gurgling swirl of the slowly ebbing tide. He heard a myriad of voices in its murmur; he saw a world of colors in its quiet, constant foam, — in the eel grass stretching seaward — in the drift and waste that came sailing from the hidden town and was swept outward to the hidden sea. When he was drenched to the skin, Captain Hudson called to him to go below and keep dry. So he trotted down, as he was told. He could still hear the whispering music of the water. With his head resting on the table and with his eyes closed, he sat hearkening to it and talking back to it. After a while, chug, chug, came a sound of little waves slapping the ship's side. The sound was accompanied by a muffled dipping echo, as if some fabled sea-horse was galloping on the crests. And then came a voice — a cry in the fog, and the skipper's answering call.

“Ship ahoy!”

“Ahoy!”

The cabin floor dropped under Edmund's feet. His hopes sank to the bottom of the Thames. He knew that voice, — it was his uncle's.

You recall how blindly Cinderella ran when midnight overtook her at the prince's ball, and her brave disguise faded into rags? Well, the mystic hour had tolled for the runaway in the cabin; he was no longer the resourceful, self-reliant Henry Wilson, but little Edmund Clarence Stedman, and he came up the hatchway to the deck ready, in a child's unconsciousness of power, to give himself up at once.

The skiff was lying alongside the *Ann and Emily*, riding easy in the calm. Deacon Stedman had dragged himself up to the gunwale, but he could not hoist himself over the beam. That portion of his person bounded by his waistcoat was too portly an obstacle to be easily managed. There he was, gripping on with both his hands, his toes in the skiff, his head above the ship's gunwale, steaming with exertion, beside himself with the uncertainty of his footing, and glaring at Edmund.

Edmund stood like a seaman with his feet set wide apart.

"So you are the young gentleman that was going to run away?" said the deacon, when he could command his wind. "Why did you run away?"

"Because, Sir, no one but Annie ever speaks kindly to me, Sir, and because I wanted my mother."

"I thought you wanted to be a great man."

"I do, Sir."

"Did you ever hear of a great man running away?"

"Yes, Sir; Captain Marryat."

"H'm! Well, my young Captain Marryat, you step down into this skiff just as fast as you can."

Neither spoke during the hour's row to Norwich, — a long hard pull against the tide. When they stepped foot on the wharf at the Landing, the rain was driving faster and finer than ever.

"Edmund," said his uncle, while a twinkle lit his steely eye, "you are so small and so spry that I believe you could run between the rain-drops from the Landing to the Green without getting wet. However," he added, and grasped Edmund by the hand. He was too wary to give his nephew a chance to prove his agility to skip and slip between the drops. He kept fast hold of him, and hand in hand, prodigal and guardian reached home.

"Can't somebody in the house *mother* the lad a little?" Edmund heard his uncle ask, as that gentleman strode into the kitchen after sending Edmund to his room for dry clothes.

"He's had just as much mothering as my children ever had," replied Eunice.

"But can't you see that he's different from our boys; he is more spirited," said the deacon patiently and yet in desperation.

"He is the Devil!" spoke up Aunt Abby decisively.

"Abby — Abby —" remonstrated the deacon.

Abby wiped her flushed face with her apron. "You need not Abby me, James," she said firmly.

"Abby," interposed the deacon, kindling, "I wish you to understand — I wish every one of this household to understand — that the lad is wretchedly unhappy, and that it is the talk of the neighborhood. It seems to me that each one of us might be a trifle more lenient with him — a trifle less ready to push him to the wall."

It was an unheard-of event for Deacon Stedman to interfere with the rule of the ladies, and in the silence that followed his departure from

the kitchen, Edmund felt that his own course was justified.

A few minutes afterwards, Annie slipped into Edmund's room, and kneeling before him, called him her bad, bad boy, and mopped his wet hair, and kissing him, tossed his pinafore into the entry, and told him that he need not wear it any more, because he was too large; and that she was going to tell her father. But she sat in the chair by the door a long time, with a look in her eyes — so vague and yet so gentle.

IX

TWILIGHT AND EVENING STAR

LITTLE Charlie, too, went on a voyage some years later. He did not run away. Deacon Stedman, who was his guardian no less than Edmund's, found a ship for him on which to embark and helped him off. Charlie signed for a three-and-one-half-year whaling voyage with Captain Potter, whose hide was as tough as a walrus's, and who was as much at home on an ice floe as is a polar bear. Although Charlie reached a man's estate, he reached it without a man's strength, and in those days folk believed that to be driven through and through with salt and sleet, to fight for life against the elements, was a cure-all for youthful ailments; but the trip must be long and rigorous to be effectual.

Thus it came to pass that Charlie bunked with South Sea Islanders and vermin, because his

guardian thought it best, — Charlie, a gentle, studious, brave youth, too gently born to be reared roughly. All the crew deserted save he. "And he sailed, and he sailed," past many a strange land and stranger people; he saw pelicans and flamingoes that flew in clouds of pink and white and, settling, made islands with their wings; he saw trustful seals vacant-eyed as little children and too ignorant of ill to be affrighted; he saw great whales

"come sailing by,
Sail and sail with unshut eye,
Round the world forever and aye."

It was to slaughter these dumb creatures that the good ship *Mount Wollaston* wandered to and fro, from snow to heat; and Captain Potter fell upon them lustily. But Charlie had little heart for taking life. Was life not what he sought?

Like Edmund, Charlie was fond of books; and Edmund, his big brother who loved him, gave him his own copy of Scott to take with him.

Charlie sailed farther than Edmund had ever dreamed of sailing. Between whiles he sojourned

in cities where the rain fell for weeks together, yet where the sun seemed always overhead, just as on Robinson Crusoe's island. Yet before his journeyings were half-way done, he was pondering over a longer voyage and longing to reach home and say good-by to Edmund. He was in fear that he would not reach home in time. At night he tossed in his bunk, he was so fearful.

But Charlie reached New York at last! And he brought with him Edmund's book — permeated from cover to cover with sperm oil. He brought too, as a gift to Edmund, his own log, a journal in which, as a seaman, he had entered each day's course and weather and spoil. Ever afterwards Edmund doubly prized his copy of Scott; and he prized the logbook, — so neat, so painstaking, so like a gentleman's and a scholar's.

Charlie, who went away as cabin boy, returned as first mate. He was less sunny-lipped than Edmund, less erect and mischievous, — but then you see he had that still longer journey to muse upon. Perhaps his knowledge of his father made him thoughtful. It may seem strange, but it is true that although Charlie did not remember

his father, or think at all of him when he was a little lad, yet on the last voyage homeward he thought of him every hour.

You may be sure that pretty Elizabeth, who at this time was sight-seeing in Paris, was proud of him. I could tell you much of her gay life at the Court of Italy, and of her home in Florence, circled by the Brownings and their brilliant coterie. His Uncle James too was proud of him; and so was Edmund.

But Charlie never returned to Norwich to the only hearth that he had known. Norwich seemed a hopelessly long way to him now that it was so near. Edmund went to the ship to meet him, and Charlie laid his head down on Edmund's shoulder thinking to rest a little while — perhaps through the summer — in the house of his mother's kin in Brooklyn, — and then go on to Norwich Town.

Elizabeth's kinsmen wrote to her, and Edmund wrote. But when the mother opened Edmund's letter, a lock of hair dropped from it, and then she knew that Charlie — her baby — had already set sail for the Undiscovered Country.

X

PRINCE FLORIZEL ON HIS TRAVELS

THE noise of Edmund's attempt to run away, and of his failure, spread through Norwich Town. "Hello, Captain Marryat!" "How's the fog, Captain Marryat!" "Ahoy there, Captain Marryat!" were the greetings that belayed him as he sauntered around the Green on his return to private life.

He passed by the salutations of his townfolk with dreamy unconcern. His mind, unoccupied for the nonce by its own inventions, drifted. It wanted only the current of an idea to quicken and direct its motions. He passed the Coit house, — Mr. Coit's son had given a party in the spring. Tom and Ed Harland had given a party; the Spaldings, the Hydes, the Armses, the Pecks, the Lathrops, the Cleveland — every boy and girl of his acquaintance had given a party. Edmund

came to a dead stop. He only was left. Why had he never given a party! Why had it not occurred to him how remiss he was! He had been unpardonably rude.

He lifted the latch of Mr. Spalding's gate and walked in. Mrs. Spalding herself answered his knock.

"I have come to invite you to my party — you and your family!" he announced, a little short of wind.

"No! Indeed? What time is your party to be?" said Mrs. Spalding.

What time? The question of the time had not occurred to Edmund. "At five o'clock to-day," he answered; and suddenly sighed in the relief of having settled the hour so easily. "Good-by!" He walked off.

He came upon Lady Louisa Huntington crossing the sidewalk. "You are please to come to my party — you and your friends. It is to be at five o'clock," he announced instantly.

"Of course we will come. How very kind of your uncle and aunt. I am so surprised," said Lady Louisa.

"I am inviting all the old families," exclaimed Edmund, and rosy with hospitality, ran on. The party was progressing incredibly well. It was much easier giving a party than he would have supposed. Details settled themselves. At the Cleveland house no one was in sight. He walked to the front door as was proper, considering the occasion. He was growing confident and he pulled the bell-handle boldly.

No one came.

He would have run around to the back door but for Mr. Peck's manservant, who was watching him from across the Green. He pulled the handle again.

Still no answer. Perhaps the bell rang in the kitchen, and he had not pulled hard enough. He laid hold of the handle with both hands; he set his feet against the house; he pulled manfully.

Out came the bell-handle; it came out altogether; wire came out after it — lots of wire. But the bell did not ring, so he kept pulling the wire.

Ting-a-ling! Ting-a-ling-ling! The bell rang at last. How fortunate! It would never have

done to have slighted the Clevelands. As he pulled on the wire, he could hear the bell coming along the floor towards him. There was a silence and a hitch; the bell had caught. He gave the wire as skilful a yank as if he were fishing, and his line had caught on a snag. He heard a chair go over, then along came the bell again. Ting-a-ling-ling! Ting-a-ling-ling-ling-ling! Along came Mrs. Cleveland; Josh the hired man; Angelina the maidservant; Scipio the dog, too scared to bark and too fascinated to run away. Edmund faced them.

"I am glad you heard the bell," he said with a swift sigh.

"There have been times when I have not heard it, but I heard it this morning," said Mrs. Cleveland in a very peculiar tone.

"I had to pull it for quite a while before I could make it ring," he explained politely. He handed her the handle. "I knew that you could not be *deef* — not at your age," he added.

Mrs. Cleveland laughed outright.

He did not know why Mrs. Cleveland laughed, but he laughed too. He was so happy to be happy.

"I came to invite you to my party, Mrs. Cleveland," he said. He felt sorry for Josh and Angelina. "I would like to invite Josh and 'Lina — but it is the judge's party too, and I am inviting only those whom" — He did not know how to finish. He looked from Mrs. Cleveland to Angelina and back again at Mrs. Cleveland, in pain and yet aware that it would not do to invite the hired help. "— those whom — those whom" — he repeated, distressed and distraught; "those — whom — God — hath — joined together — let — no — man — put — asunder!" he ended in a flash of delight at escaping from his dilemma.

For the credit of the Stedman family, he went up one side of the Green, circled the triangle, and came down along the Around-Town road.

As he neared the parsonage and was leaving the sidewalk for the gutter, in order to pass by on the other side like a true Levite, it occurred to him that at all functions of importance the clergy was present. There was no help for it. The parson must be invited. He sat down on the wall and dusted his boots with a mullein leaf,

wiping the soles as nicely as the tops. He tiptoed along on the grass to keep clean and lifted the massive knocker. There was one loud, round, firm, full knock. He was pleased with it. It betokened business.

"I have a message for the parson," said Edmund to the woman who came to the door.

"The parson is in his study. What name shall I say?"

Edmund knew that the woman knew who he was. Why did she ask that question? "You may tell him that it is Judge Stedman's nephew," he answered and gulped several times. He was scarlet.

"You are to walk into the library," announced the woman, after leaving him for an interminable time.

The parson was seated at his desk, writing.

Edmund placed himself in a chair next to the door and waited for him to speak. He watched the sand in the hourglass falling — falling — falling. When at length the parson spoke, Edmund jumped quite out of his chair. He stood up as if that were what he had been intending to do right along.

The parson said, "Bubbie, what is your errand?" The parson called all the boys "Bubbie" and all the girls "Sissie."

"I have come to ask you," Edmund said and then faltered. He gulped and began again, adopting a more official form. "We have come to invite you to our party. We are going to have the very best food to eat. The Judge would like you to invoke the Divine Blessing!"

The parson eyed Edmund — and Edmund eyed the parson!

"At what hour is the party to be?" inquired the parson.

Edmund's wits left him. He could not remember what hour he had told Lady Louisa! "It is a kind of continuous party," he said helplessly.


"What!" thundered the parson in the tone which he used when he was denouncing sinners from the pulpit or demanding, "Why will ye die!"

Edmund took a step toward the door. "If you come when the Ladies Huntington come, you will be in plenty of time," he replied, to his own unexpected relief.

The parson cast a keen glance at the rug upon which Edmund had stood the minute earlier, to see if he had tracked any dust into the house. Every strand was fleckless. His eye returned to the doorway. Edmund was gone.

Wing-footed little Iris that Edmund was, he never made a swifter exit than from the parsonage.

On the road again, his quickened heartbeats slackened; his color dropped; he studied the scenery. North, west, south, claimed his pen-sive, loving, lingering gaze; the cold height of Gal-lows Hill with the storm-racked pines upon it; the feathery stairway of fern and moss behind Mr. Peck's tavern, down which the rivulets sprang as if with feet and up which the pale mists from the burial ground climbed at night like troops of childish ghosts striving to reach their oldtime playground; the meetinghouse rocks with the meadow lands beyond them dipping into pools of sunlight and song. He kept his eyes averted from the east. The glimpse of the Stedman manor and the blue smoke mounting comfortably from the kitchen chimney did not appear to be a subject of pleasing contemplation. Yet the in-



evitable was before him. He arrived at the Stedman doorsill at last, despite his quiet pace, and entered the kitchen with as brave a front as he could muster. He was beginning to have his doubts.

It was baking day; his Aunt Abby was just about to try a card of gingerbread with a wisp. "Don't make a draught, Edmund!" cried the good lady.

"I think it will taste very nice," commented Edmund. Innocency and bravado — mixed but not mingled — streaked his cheek with white and red.

Aunt Abby, glancing over her shoulder, caught sight of his face, and forgetful of her gingerbread, turned upon him.

"What have you been up to, Edmund; you have been into some mischief! I know you."

"I think gingerbread is ever so much nicer than layer cake for a party," he said, sighing. "I don't like layer cake. Layer cake makes me sick to my stomach."

"Who is going to have a party?" exclaimed Aunt Abby. She had never been sure of what

was happening since the day that Edmund came to town.

"I am going to have a party — a surprise party. I have invited them."

"You?"

He nodded.


She dropped into a chair, then rallied sharply, brought to by the thought of Tom, Dick, and Harry.

"Whom have you invited?" she questioned anxiously.

"All the bloods," said her nephew solidly.

Within five minutes, Eunice, Jerusha, Mary, Annie — all the womenfolk — were in the kitchen beating eggs, greasing tins, creaming butter. No family in the county stood higher socially than Judge Stedman's. The party was upon them; there was no help for it. For the honor of the family, the party should be received and entertained befitting Stedman traditions.

If Edmund had been a little bird listening to a sermon by Saint Francis he could not have been more sweetly silent and attentive during the rest of the forenoon. Only once did he offer to cheep.



When Aunt Eunice was searching in the preserve closet for a particular bottle of raspberry vinegar, his little face, all anxiety, peered through the dusk of the closet into the ray of the tallow dip.

“Don’t you think that we might give the parson a little Barbadoes?” he questioned earnestly. “The captain always gives him a little Barbadoes.”

By five o’clock the most extensive, elaborate, and merry lawn party in town history was under way in Deacon Stedman’s orchard, and Edmund, forgotten and overlooked by his elders, flitted to and fro, gay as a bird, glad as the dawn, instant in season and out of season, wild with pride and glee; handing Lady Louisa a cate and cousin Lucrece a raspberry vinegar. Ah, what a party he was giving!

“Bent almost double,
Deaf as a witch,
Gout her chief trouble —
Just as if rich.

Greeting her next of kin’s
Nephew or niece, —
Foolish old, prating old
Cousin Lucrece!”

thousandfold more wonderful now that he was older and unwearied than it had seemed when he was five. The noises fascinated him. At his grandfather's house, he lay awake half the night, harkening to an occasional dray as it jolted over the cobblestones. He could have stood still forever, it seemed to him, staring down River Street at the ships that went and came. The world seemed very large and he very small, and he was content to keep his hand in his grandfather's hand, and hasten along, with short, vehemently quick steps keeping abreast of the old gentleman's strides. Diagonally across the street from his grandfather's house was the house in which he had been born, and in which his cousin Griffin lived.


"Look into Edmund's eyes, Grif," said the old gentleman to the lad. "Edmund is like his father, your uncle, the same guileless, steadfast front."

Griffin looked into his little kinsman's eyes and met his own eyes mirrored in their blue; and he laughed and took Edmund's hand in timid young cousinliness. But Edmund was more of

a talker. "Do you love it out-of-doors?" he asked. "And do you like the White Cat? I do. When I grow up, I am going to write — just like my mother. And I am going to be a gentleman. What are you going to do?"

Griffin shook his head; he could not tell. His eyes were not shadowed with the haze of an untoward destiny! — yet down the hillside of years not greatly distant, when the gardens of New England should give their loveliest garlands to the red scythe of war, a sky as blue and brave as his blue eyes is bending down in pity of one dauntless flower that will never lift itself again.

My own father was at headquarters when the rumor overtook him that his colonel, Griffin Stedman, was shot to the heart. He sprang to his horse and spurred to the rear, with the sharpshooter's bullets whistling across his gauntleted wrists. Stretched out on a couch in his tent he found his friend, twisting his fierce yellow mustaches and pulling them straight. His brows were drawn in mortal anguish. He did not moan or toss. My father sat by his pillow and watched. It was the Sunday before Petersburg.




The tidings had been telegraphed to Washington and an order making the colonel a general was speeding back over the wires. But another messenger came apace, bearing to the brave, the accomplished Griffin Stedman a furlough without limit.

No: Edmund did not once think of Norwich, or of his impressive promises; not until he came into sight of the Green and descried all the boys in the town forgathered there in expectation of him and his presents did he recall his notebook. Parched with shame, loose-jointed with mortification, downcast, dispirited, loath, footing his way as slowly as a nonagenarian, the returning traveler crawled from the stage to the ground.

"Where's my gun?" cried the crowd. "Where's my pony?"

Edmund shook his head. He felt that he was less than the littlest frog in the pool.

But his shame burned its lesson into his soul. Never again did he make a promise that he did not keep. As a man, men knew that his word was his life; they could depend upon whatever went out of his mouth; they could count on him.



XI

AH, THE IMMORTAL PASSADO!

ALL the boys at Deacon Stedman's looked forward to the midsummer holidays. It was their chief topic of talk.

Mr. Robert Aikman came to live in the household at the closing of the school year. When the reason for his coming was made known, the boys wilted. He was to open a summer school in the brick schoolhouse just north of Sentry Hill, and so soon as the boys finished the regular school year on the Green, the deacon was planning to hand them over for the summer to Mr. Aikman.

Oh, brazen sky! Oh, heaven without ears!

"The children seem to have the spring fever early this season," remarked Aunt Abby and fetched from the closet the jug of brimstone and treacle. That brimstone-laden treacle! The

boys usually pranced after taking it — to prove that their health was reëstablished and that a second dose was superfluous! They walked past Aunt Abby with a sprightliness that made the cure-all famed. Their gait was elasticity itself; they bolted whatever food was set before them. They bowed into the corn-meal mush audibly.

But for once the treacle seemed to have lost its savor. Just as poor SMIKE and the urchins of Dotheboys Hall lined up each morning and met the spoon, so EDMUND and little CHARLIE, HUNT and TURVILLE ADAMS, and the LASAGA brothers lined up for double doses. Yet not even double doses of the brimstone appeared to strike in.

EDMUND grew peakèd; he felt languid and peevish. When the morning came that he must set out for SENTRY HILL schoolhouse and MR. AIKMAN, he moved as if he had the rickets. He stubbed along in the middle of the highroad, with one foot trailing behind him. When he dragged his foot forward, the toe scraped a groove in the dust. He gave vent to a funny little noise, — something between a snort and a grunt, — with

the regularity of a hiccough. He was oblivious of all passers. He was dead to the world and to the future.

When he entered the schoolhouse, he went stubbing across the room to his seat. He resented having to study in summer, and his feelings infected his feet. His knees gave way; his chest fell in, and his shoulders stuck out. Even his lower lip hung down as if it still were confronted with the treacle spoon. The scholars were ready to laugh at the sight of him. The boys were dead set against going to school; they itched to tickle the nose of a trout with a nice writhing worm; mutiny was written in their books.

"Edmund Stedman," cried Mr. Aikman, "can't you walk properly!"

Edmund, brought to self-consciousness by suddenly finding himself an object of amusement, came to a blank stop.

"Lift your feet!" commanded Mr. Aikman.

Edmund lifted one foot with as much diligence as if he were extricating it from a quagmire; he set it down with precision and squareness.

Then removing his attention from his foot, he glanced up at Mr. Aikman for approval.

"Walk naturally!" cried Mr. Aikman in wrath.

"Ain't I walking naturally?" asked Edmund, in genuine surprise.

The school burst into laughter.

"Walk across the room the way you always walk, or take a feruling," returned Mr. Aikman.

Edmund did not move.

Mr. Aikman picked up his ferule. "Are you going to start?"

"I've forgotten how I walk," spoke up Edmund, in sheer perplexity.

The big boys laughed outright.

"I'll give you something to help you remember!" cried Mr. Aikman. He thrust back his chair against the wood stove, and hurled his ferule at Edmund's head.

Everybody knew what that meant.

"You lick that boy, and you'll have me to lick," muttered Dave Stevens, a raw-boned uncaring youth.

"What's that, Stevens?" said Mr. Aikman sharply.

Stevens was silent.

"Stevens knows when to close his shutters," whispered Joe Case, a giant of a fellow.

"I'll give you ten demerits, Stevens," said Mr. Aikman; "and you too, Case."

Stevens held out his hand. "Thanks."

The girls tittered nervously.

Mr. Aikman discreetly overlooked Stevens's offer to take whatever was coming his way. His face was swollen with anger. Although a good man, he was brutal. He was given to humiliating his pupils and had a habit of hurling his ferule at an offender, and expecting the offender to fetch the ferule to him and take the licking.

When Edmund saw the ferule coming, he took a step alert and natural enough to satisfy the most exacting eye. The ferule struck the black-board and fell with a clatter.

It was Mr. Aikman's way of throwing down the glove. Edmund accepted the challenge. Without waiting to be told, he picked up the ferule and walked to Mr. Aikman. He was white and pulsing with excitement and tensy of feel-

ing. His slim little wrists hung from his outgrown coat as blue-veined and delicate as a girl's. His hands were small and elegant, but one of them was fastened on the old ferule with the grip of a man. He extended the ferule to Mr. Aikman without quailing.

Now Edmund was a little lad. He was slender. He walked among his mates like a cock-robin among roosters. His slight stature was his daily shame, — a shame which he faced in his heart and to which he bid defiance. More than all, he was helpless; he had no father — no one to stand between him and the world. Mr. Aikman was a grown man. He was master of the situation by reason of brute force, years, and the crowning endowment of authority. If he had seized Edmund's ready palm and levied his blows upon it, as he would have done in the case of any of the other boys, Edmund would have taken his punishment without rebelling. But no, the schoolmaster was bent on breaking his spirit, on humiliating him, on making him cry with mortification. He grasped him by his collar and laid him across his knee. And all

the girls looking on! It was too much to be borne.

In his anger and haste, the schoolmaster did not observe that his chair did not stand squarely on the platform, that when he had shoved it backwards, one leg had caught against the foot of the stove. Edmund espied it and set the ball of his foot firmly against the stove. Mr. Aikman raised his ferule in the air. Edmund gave a push with all his might against the stove. Over went Mr. Aikman's chair; over went Mr. Aikman on the top of his chair; over went Edmund on top of Mr. Aikman.

Pride was Mr. Aikman's ruling passion as well as Edmund's, and it was strong in death. In his downfall, he had no thought of saving himself. He held on to his head with both hands. He did not wish to lose his wig before the young ladies! Mirth and consternation demoralized the school. Robert Aikman was only an instant in getting on his feet, but in that instant Edmund sprang through the doorway, and taking the stone steps at a leap, flew up the road for dear life.

What should Mr. Aikman do? Run like a woman for Edmund, or look after his school? He wisely decided to bring back order into the fold, and to let the black sheep go for the present. Edmund and he lived under the same roof; he had him as surely as if he had him in his hand.

To tell the truth, Edmund was prepared for any fate. He was not certain that his uncle would not kill him when he learned of the disturbance. Mr. Aikman was held in sincere esteem in the Stedman household. Every one thought well of him and spoke well of him, excepting Jerusha who did not appear to think of anybody, and seldom addressed the school-teacher. So Edmund went to Jerusha's room with the unstudied intention of making his case strong with her, but when he looked into the understanding serenity of her gaze, he said bluntly, "Cousin Jerusha, I'm the dickens." He hung around a minute and finally confessed, "Jerusha, you know that fellow Aikman; well, I shouldn't be surprised if he took a scunner at me, some time."

But that fellow Aikman said nothing when he returned to dinner. Manifestly, he had sched-

uled the storm for the next evening, when there would be time for the accessories. Meanwhile Edmund made up his mind to go back to school and brave the lion in the den. He could not stay home, and he was too conscience-oppressed to play truant.

XII

OUT OF THE FRYING PAN

BUT the school affair was not ended. According to the rumor that came from Fuller's store, it had only just begun.

It transpired that after Edmund fled from school, Mr. Aikman returned to the classroom and dismissed Joe Case and David Stevens for the remainder of the day. But at the close of the afternoon, he announced to the scholars that he would give Joe and Dave a fering at the outset of the next morning's session. This announcement was reported in Fuller's store in the presence of Joe Case, whereupon Case declared that he would pull off Mr. Aikman's wig. Joe Case was more than Mr. Aikman's match in brawn and height, but Mr. Aikman was as active as a hornet. Mild-eyed Mr. Fuller said, "No, no, Joe, better

be a good lad," but the Indian hunter who sometimes brought flowers and herbs to Jerusha pricked Joe on, not only to pull off the wig but to keep it as a memento. Levi Wattles wagered ten to one on Joe Case, and Particular Perkins wagered ten to one on Mr. Aikman; but when the sexton offered to hold the stakes, both bettors waxed cautious, and bet over again without stipulating any amount.

The younger set heard the talk in the store, and forthwith ran to the Stedman Manor to forewarn Mr. Aikman. Because Edmund was the primal cause of the trouble, no one dared to tell the deacon, or Aunt Abby, or Aunt Eunice; Annie confided in Miss Moffit, the mantua-maker, and at dinner Miss Moffit took her place beside the schoolmaster as if she were attending his obsequies. But Miss Moffit's supreme betrayal of apprehension was when passing him the butter, — she shook with fear, her face turned white, — she passed the dish with the air of one who is handing her best friend a sod to cover his coffin. The little girls were stark with terror. They followed Mr. Aikman with looks that implored

him to stay away from school. Every hour he appeared more diminutive in their eyes, and as he lost in size, he gained in support.

But Mr. Aikman, undaunted, held to his purpose. Armed with a rawhide, he strode to school at the usual hour. The scholars had already gathered.

Mr. Aikman took his stand in the middle of the room. He called first for Dave Stevens. Dave, affecting the booby, crawled forward, and for the amusement of the school, burst forth into such blubberings when the ferule stung his palm that the scholars laughed aloud. The laugh was on Mr. Aikman.

After Dave, wiping his nose with his sleeve, and digging his fists into his eyes, had taken his seat, Mr. Aikman called for Joe Case, and Case, coming forward, made a snatch at the schoolmaster's wig. But Mr. Aikman was too quick for him; springing to the top of his desk, he brought the rawhide around Joe's neck and shoulders. So began one of the biggest fights ever known in Norwich Town.

"Get him by the leg!" cried little Stedman,

in a ferment of excitement to have the under-dog seize his one chance.

Joe grabbed the teacher by the leg; he tried to wrench him off his feet. Again and again, with his head laid against Mr. Aikman's knee for protection, he sprang at the rawhide, but Mr. Aikman was too spry. At last Case snatched up the poker and tried to fell his opponent with it, the rawhide curling around him at every turn.

Either man might have taken the other's life in that moment; Case was blindly desperate; Mr. Aikman was infuriated, but cool.

The girls ran down the stone stairway for help, and having reached the street, flew back again to see if the fighters were still living. They fluttered up and down like frightened doves. The flock of them laid hold of George Brigdon who was passing on the Out-Along-Road, but George feared to enter the school and stood at the door, ready to run if the field of battle shifted towards him.

Mr. Aikman subdued Joe at last. Joe, with his face and neck looking like a piece of red-barred calico, admitted that he was beaten;

and Mr. Aikman expelled him at once and forever from the school. He expelled Dave Stevens, also.

Would you like to hear what became of Dave Stevens? He could have killed Mr. Aikman that day of the fight, if he had chosen. He was a human bulldog, — he never let go, when he once laid hold. He was a brave fellow — nothing could make him cower. He was not of a spirit that can set itself to petty tasks. Not long after his trouble with Mr. Aikman, he hired himself out to Mr. Wilcox in the Scotland Road, and was told to clear a field of stone. He cleared the space by flinging the stones into the adjoining lot; then off he went, and did not return. He disappeared from Norwich, and was not heard of till the John Brown Raid at Harper's Ferry. If you wish to read about Dave himself, read the ballad *How Old Brown Took Harper's Ferry*, written by Edmund nearly a score of years later, when he was no less stirred by the fight forerunning the Civil War than he was stirred that summer morning at the outposts of his youth.

“ ’Twas the sixteenth of October, on the evening of
a Sunday ;

‘This good work’, declared the Captain, ‘shall be on
a holy night !’

It was on a Sunday evening, and before the noon of
Monday,

With two sons and Captain Stevens, fifteen pri-
vates — black and white,

Captain Brown,

Osawatomie Brown,

Marched across the bridged Potomac, and knocked
the sentry down.”

But the authorities soon had the Martinsburg Sharpshooters, the Charlestown Volunteers, the Shepherdstown and Winchester Militia, and the Government Marines marching upon Stevens and his captain, while the Virginia gentry gathered to the baying. They stabbed old Brown three times to make sure, they were so in fear that he might trick them. Dave was literally shot to pieces — yet he breathed. It seemed as if it was not in him to die. The authorities nursed his brave, shot-riddled carcass back to life — in order that he might be hanged and know it. And they hanged him on a tree like men of

until that instant had seemed a fortune forerunning a downfall, went to his head. He could not eat his supper. Not the self-confident stare of the treacle and brimstone jug on the dresser could make him do it. He was all thanksgiving. So soon as he was dismissed from table, he stole out of doors into the still air. He gazed unbelievably out upon the night-damp that arched the Lathrops' lowlands in a canopy of mist. Then he shinned the apple tree within touch of the bedchamber where Charlie and the Adams boys would soon be sleeping. He settled himself. The wisteria that lay limp and light along the boughs was not more at home than he. He was attempting to take in the joys of this mortal life.

Presently the inner gate stirred. Jerusha was going to Sunday-school teachers' meeting with Mr. Aikman. They were coming through the garden. Edmund gazed broodingly down through the gloaming, incurious as a star. Clove pinks spread under him, girdled in green. Marjoram climbed over into the path.

In the grape-wreathed eaves a house dove murmured. The perfumes from the flowers as-

cended as if the flowers themselves were lifted to his freckled nose. Such a quiet little lad as he was, when he was quiet. He sniffed the keen scent of the cedar as the new gate swung for the first time on the night air. Dreamily following Mr. Aikman and Jerusha with eyes as deep as a sloe's, he thought of a host of things between whiles, — of the trough that he was planning to make into an aquarium — of the toad that he was taming in the hope of presenting it as a gift to his aunt. Jerusha had not appeared to favor Mr. Aikman; when she was not haughty with him, she mocked him to his face by her indifference. Now they walked decorously, Jerusha and her teacher, he in Sunday black, she in a green silk that fell leaflike from her full-blown shoulders. The marjoram held its breath, fearful of the schoolmaster's boot; and when only Jerusha's shawl brushed its leaves, it filled the dusk with the spicy fragrance of its relief. Mr. Aikman had come within the shadow of the apple boughs and had halted. It was Edmund now that held his breath. Mr. Aikman and Jerusha stood, circled around with roses, —

Jerusha the fairest and the palest. And Mr. Aikman gathered her like any rose, and, lifting her face in his hands, gazed deep into it, himself bending until his lips met hers.

The utter sweetness of the silence, the unfathomable tenderness of Mr. Aikman's look, flooded Edmund's soul. Little gentleman in heart, he closed his eyes. He was choked with desire and blinded by an ethereal sadness, a sense of the unguessed bliss that waited in the world. He, too, could love; he knew that he could — if only Jerusha would let him love her the way that Mr. Aikman loved her. If only he had some one of his own to guard and cherish — some one — or a little bird! He would love to have a little bird.


After a long time, he opened his eyes. Jerusha and the schoolmaster were gone. Gone, too, was the new moon, fallen like a petal from the sky! And at his feet, as he slipped to the path, lay a ring of petals that had fallen from a willess rose.

XIII

THE WANDER SUMMER

EDMUND was out of doors before dawn in his zeal to begin his vacation. He had not realized how greatly he was counting upon it until Mr. Aikman's arrival almost crossed it from the calendar and he had been left with innumerable enterprises unfulfilled at the tips of his fingers.

He ran up and around the Green, — he had so much to do, — and then he walked ; and last of all he lay down on The Doorstep wall in the broad sun — as lazy as a lizard. He escorted his mates to the schoolhouse door, and at the close of school was waiting to receive them into freedom. To crown the hour, he was given a knife. He carried it open and to the fore, ready for every purpose. He cut Miss Moffit's baste with it ; broke the seals on available letters ; picked his small white teeth. He picked them like a pirate. He bade



the boys sit down and look at him play Mumble-the-peg. Hunt Adams, with brown bare arms clasped around brown bare knees, watched the knife with covetous eyes. Edmund cast it twice — three times. It struck Hunt's knee. Horrors! It slid into the flesh, amid the joint, as easily as into mire. Edmund laid hold of it mightily; the blade snapped short.

"Now see what you've done, Hunt!" cried the boys, when they found their tongues, "sticking your knee into everything! You've broken Ned's new knife!"

Doctor Butler dragged the blade out with tweezers, but Edmund had the sympathy of them all. He was the hero. His knife had done it. Besides, he was full of business. He was on the road before the sun and was going all day long, yet his plans still kept ahead of him. Again he had only a bladeless knife, but his interests grew with the days.

Standing tiptoe at the window of Lathrop's tavern, he peered in at the partners "making graces." His fingers tapped on the sill in rhythm with the girls' feet; his breath halted for Tom the

Fiddler each time that that pathetic comedian paused with bow uplifted. A dancing party on a midsummer night was a fine thing. But in winter, — ah, winter after all was the season for dancing! Once in the winter he had stolen out of bed and scurried to the tavern to see the fun, and none of the Stedman household was the wiser. His Captain Marryat adventure had taught him how easy a thing it is to run away — provided you have a place to run to. He did not dream any more of running away to his mother. Rumors that she was journeying hither and yon, and that she was so successful, so admired, made him falter and seem strange. No, he did not cheat himself with dreams of her. His mother was for older playmates; he understood the household's whispers. But whenever he was taken by an inclination to cool his bare toes in the starry dew, or spy for moths among the moon-white flowers, he waited till his bedfellows were sleeping, and then let himself down from the window. And whenever he felt as if he would like a little frolic, out he stepped as airily as Peter Pan! The girls petted Edmund, and none of the big boys told on

you gave him time to feel around for it a little. In the sunlight, too, the quartet sat there and learned delicacy of touch and patience of endeavor, making miniature bladders out of the leaves of a starveling wan plant that by crouching close to the earth held its own on the windy brow of Sentry Hill. To-day that same timid leek — the selfsame root — grows on the Harland rocks. It lives generation in and generation out, while men blow by like leaves.

In a pother of patriotism, Edmund embraced the example set by the older boys, and marching belligerently upon Harriet and Lizzie Arnold's door, flung clods, mud, stones, at it. Harriet and Lizzie Arnold were the helpless, undefended cousins of Benedict Arnold, and they lived out their days in a sorry cottage (our country confiscated the Arnold property because Benedict Arnold betrayed us to the king) at the bend in the Hartford turnpike, north from Dodo Perkins's shop, where to-day the good priest Father McCann lives and, tending his parish as if it were a garden, makes a flower plot of Edmund's base of supplies, — the gravel bank. The Arnold

sisters did not marry — none would marry the gentle creatures; and when they died, the fathers of the boys who persecuted them buried them in nameless graves in the old burying-ground. And there they lie, — somewhere, — innocent, ostracized Gentility condemned to death while still alive, because of their kinsman's treachery. Whether Benedict Arnold knew or not that his far relations suffered for his shame, he sent them from England a monthly stipend so long as they lived.

Edmund, with his mates, meandered among the pumpkins in a certain cornfield on hills to the southward of Stedman Manor, culling here an ear and there an ear. Afterwards, he and they built a fire behind his uncle's orchard wall and gnawed their spoils. They called themselves buccaneers and, by their own stories of the havoc they wrought, the town had cause to blench with fear. They knew well enough that they were thieves, and they ran as if the whole police force, or at least the parson, were after them when they mistook the rustling of a field mouse for the foot-fall of the Owner.

The boys were chagrined indeed when they learned by chance that the vague Owner against whom they pretended that they were armed to the teeth was Dan Gilman's Aunt Lathrop, a kindly soul, who would have cooked them her full field if she had guessed their emptiness. They never prigged the Lathrop corn again; they prigged the deacon's.

But the hours between meals were a Sabbath long, and it is to be remembered that even the disciples gathered maize on the Sabbath when they were ahungered. Edmund was ahungered all that summer. But at the home table, whenever he cleared his plate and looked at his uncle in a way that invited a second helping, one of his aunts was bound to exclaim, "I declare, James, Edmund must have something the matter with him; his appetite is abnormal!"

Edmund caught six darling trout in Bobbin Mill Brook, which he christened My Brook because he loved it, — trout large enough to fry! Oh, the glory of it — to see them sizzling each moment crisper and more brown in a tin cover over the live coals of his orchard fire! He treated like

a lord and dished up his petty fingerlings with as much circumstance as if they were whales. He crowded an entire fish on each of his six mates, and in his pride swallowed such gulps of air that wind-filled and ecstatic, he watched them eat, and himself felt no lack.

The year before, in the brook that runs to the river, — the brook that is the Burying-ground Brook and the Bobbin Mill Brook joining hands, — he had come upon a tremendous fish, fat, still, and sleepy. With one snatch he clutched it; and over the meadows was flying with it, done up in his pinafore as a present to his aunts. He was always taking presents to somebody. He was in raptures. Only to think of catching so huge a fish with his hands! But his aunts, the worldly-wise ones, turned away. "A sucker!" was all they said. Edmund, who had entered the kitchen winged, slunk off to bury out of sight the trophy that disgraced him. He did not know what a sucker was; he did not guess till then that there were suckers in the world. He had never been young before, and until one has learned either by experience or hearsay, no

one knows everything — especially in regard to suckers.

Nature herself became Edmund's school-teacher that summer. He wore smooth the short cut to the swimming hole in the river Yantic, — a lovely spot which any city older than Norwich would cherish, — and in the delight of swimming forgot for the time the pains and shames of encounters with suckers. The big boys shoved him headlong and ducked him under, and soon he was diving among lily pads and under them as reliant as a loon. He made a raft and poled it — Bobbin Mill Brook was an uncaring, whirling current six feet across when a rainfall freshened it. He beguiled fisherman Goss to let him hold the helm of the catboat *Osprey*, and his buoyant heart rose at the lift of the surge. He rode the three-year-old colt bareback. With his arms strained from their sockets, he sat beside Mr. Bela Peck and drove his span at a spanking pace.

Mr. Peck's haw-haw! awoke the hills. He was a gentleman, large, powerful, tenacious, who never felt the bit of ill-health. He drove his

own horses until he was past ninety and died at ninety-six, untamed to the last by wasting sickness. The beautiful Peck library — a library for students — was bequeathed to his town by his daughter; and it is housed to-day in an aerie as secluded as a cloister.

Like the rest of the boys too, now that Edmund was of an age to sit on the singers' bench in the organ gallery and be classed as one of "thim young treble," he carried to church as his contribution to the exercises a hollyhock bell in which he had caught a bumblebee napping, and in the middle of the long prayer he and his mates let go the silken edges of the flowers, and out flew the captives. Buzz, buzz, buzz! How the burly, bustling gold-knees stormed up and down, now over the deacons' bald pates and now under the parson's nose! Edmund was so taken up watching the congregation that he forgot himself and his part in the affray, and when one of the buzzing oafs hied past his ear, he jumped so suddenly to his feet that the other end of the bench, already overweighted, since half the choristers were on their feet to see the fun, went down,

precipitating the fat, fair Miss Forty flat against the shanks of the first tenor who was a bachelor — and he never thinking to assist her, but heaving his arms aloft in his fear of having a lady on his hands.

Edmund went to the Bean Hill Methodist Meetinghouse to attend the mid-week conference meeting whenever he could manage it. Bean Hill held the captain's share of the beauties of the county. It was a great lark to watch Harry Bond now get the mitten and now the girl. He himself asked Cynthia if he might "squire" her home, and when he asked, she tucked him under her arm and said to Tom Harland, his rival, "You don't mind having Edmund along, do you, Tom? He's such a pretty dear!" The girls simply laughed at Edmund, he was so young and sprightly. He would have enlarged the borders of Cynthia's roguish black eye if only she had not been a lady. He had a great respect for the Sex.

The boys who were intending to beau girls home sat on the last bench in the vestry. During prayer, they bowed their heads and, having surveyed the field, engaged in a hushed dispute over

the merits of their respective fair ones. Now on a night when the verbal strife hung fire, owing to the absence of the Sherman girls, Ed Harland passed along the line for inspection an old pistol that he had found in the loft of Dodo Perkins's shop. Edmund was metal hot on the anvil at the sight of a pistol. In his zeal to examine the weapon, he let it slip, and crash, bang! It struck the floor — it discharged. Ladies screamed and fainted. They believed themselves shot. Even when the bullet was found embedded in the wall, Elder B. still fingered his waistcoat, he was so sure that he was peppered.

The shooting-up, as the report of it reached Deacon Stedman, was a ruffianly attack made upon a God-fearing and peaceable public. Edmund was kept on bread and water for a week and under lock and bolt. But time in his garden-kirtled bed-chamber did not hang too heavily on his hands.

"Harland!" he piped softly from the window of his prison.

Harland shook his head and continued to walk on the further side of the road.

"Harland!"

Harland would neither hear nor see nor turn, but came to a state of standstill, like a pickerel in a pond.

"Harland," Edmund called, "if you will bring me a book, I will let you take my knife."

Harland blinked at the bait but did not bite. "The one that Hunt broke?" he asked.

"New one — brand new — New York."

Harland crossed the road to the window. Twenty minutes later, Edmund had his book. He used the book as a hostage for two books. When toward twilight he tired from reading, he stood with his nose flattened against the pane. He watched his toad in the garden-walk wait sagely for its supper to come within reach of its tongue. He watched

" a wondrous Argosy,
The Armada of the sky!"

He watched Venus pouring the loveliness of the afterlight into her cup. During a spell of sharp unseasonable cold, he saw the young creatures shiver as they came homeward against the east wind; and not so many years later, since

he was still a youth when he told tales to his youngest son, he wrote :

“Which is the Wind that brings the rain?

The East-Wind, Arty ; and farmers know
That cows come shivering up the lane,
When the East begins to blow !”

He learned that a southeast storm is six hours coming, six hours at its height, and six hours going — to the minute.

When he was let out of his prison, he felt banished and estranged. The family treated him distantly. On the street Miss Moffit hurried by him ; she feared lest he might shoot. So he kept by himself for awhile, and, for days together, tramped to Greenville and watched the workmen laying railroad ties. So well he watched them and so observantly, that when he was grown, he directed the laying of a stretch of the first section of the first Pacific Railway.

As in the bygone summers, the boys sat among the gravestones on the burying-ground slope, and Edmund in the midst of them. But although he continued to be the youngest as well as the smallest, he was their leader when it came to

tales of eye-witnessed encounters with ghosts, in particular with General Jed's. He unnerved his mates to a degree that the boldest durst not pass the lane after dark. Poor little George B, — George was always termed little, although he was not so exceedingly short of stature, — when called upon to choose between being pursued to bed by his father and having to face alone the shadows cast by his tallow dip, preferred the chastening which seemeth grievous to the companionship of his overwrought imagination !

Ed Harland revolted once but was everlastingly downed.

"Stedman," said Harland, "you talk as if you dast do anything."

"Try me," said Edmund.

"I dast you to go into the Huntington vault."

"I walked all around inside it yesterday," said Edmund coldly.

"On your honor?"

"Ain't-thet-wet?" said Edmund, thrusting his forefinger into his mouth and withdrawing it.

"Ain't-that-dry?" he went on, stropping his finger across his trousers' seat.

"Cut-your-throat-if-you-tell-a-lie?" inquired little George.

"Yes," said Edmund. And there was not a boy who disbelieved him. They stared at him in mute surmise.

"Did you see anything?" Tom at length questioned.

Edmund nodded. Reticent as Lazarus, he would not say a word. His reserve awed them more than speech.

"Miss Moffit," remarked Edmund, the next evening, to the mantua-maker who was staying overtime to work upon his clothes, "are you fearful when you go home alone in the dark?"

"No," said Miss Moffit, extracting a pin from her person to make fast a pleat in his new breeches; "no, but I do not think it proper for a female to go abroad after dusk without an escort."

"But I don't believe that any one would dast to touch you because you are so full of pins," said Edmund feelingly; "I'll beau you home, if you would like to have me, Miss Moffit. Would you feel timid with me?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Miss Moffit; and when the hour came, they were on the road.

They passed Betty Darben's ruinous wall and descended into the hollow.

"Can you remember when Betty Darben hanged herself?" inquired her escort genially. "I can. My, but she looked queer! But she didn't look half so queer as our Jerry looked when he hanged himself from our apple tree. Did you see him, Miss Moffit?"

"No," said Miss Moffit briefly.

"If ever you would like to see a hanged person, or a corpse, I will let you know if I find one. I found Jerry myself. I am quite a hand at finding hanged people. We might find one now; we might walk straight into some one hanged from one of the trees, and we might hit him with our faces so that he would swing back and forth" —

"Can't you find something else to talk about than suicides, Edmund?" exclaimed the lady.

"Oh, yes!" he said cheerfully.

"Then keep still," said Miss Moffit in nervous haste.

Blackness dropped like a well before them. The footbridge appeared to have fallen into it. The unearthly screeching of an owl afar or near, the eddying brook, the silent hushes more nerve-racking than sound, drew Miss Moffit's ears now this way and now that.

"Have you ever been in a vault, Miss Moffit?" spoke up Edmund once more.

Miss Moffit stopped short as if she were listening to something. "Don't talk so loudly," she said, between a brace of shortening breaths.

"Well," replied Edmund in a whisper that chilled her to the marrow, "I'll tell you how it is; in a vault the corpses lie all around in mouldery coffins, but you cannot see inside unless the covers rot through and fall in. *The first coffin to the right* is all dropped apart, and you can see the corpse, and the corpse is as black as black, and his eyes are holes, and they keep staring at you without seeing anything . . ."

"Land! Master Edmund, when you are quiet, you act so queer! And when you talk, how you do talk! You give a body the creeps."

"Have you ever seen a ghost, Miss Moffit?"

bridge for the twentieth time, on his way toward the Green, suddenly a shape of darkness, looming larger than mortal, crowned the brow of the hill for a slow instant and then descended toward him. It was a spectre. It was coming for him. His thoughts stopped short, but his feet did not fail him. Faster and faster he walked to meet it; he ran; he met it head-on; he stove the schoolmaster full in the paunch. Mr. Aikman's wind was clean knocked out of him.

"Hello, Stedman," he said, when he had recovered enough to know what had struck him.

"Hello, Aikman," said Stedman.

"You seem to have been bound my way," remarked the schoolmaster, dryly.

Edmund paced along beside him. In the language of Scripture, he "joined himself unto him." "Our names are a deal alike," he observed as they proceeded.

"Both of us, it seems, is a 'man.'"

"Only you have an Aik in your name instead of a Sted," replied Edmund, sparkling.

"I acknowledge I have a little ache in front of me," said the rammed schoolmaster.

Edmund laughed in delight. Mr. Aikman almost laughed.

So they reached the house and were parting, Mr. Aikman to climb Wooden Hill to Blanket Fair by the front staircase, Edmund to climb thither by the back way. But something timid yet confident was thrust through the baluster rails at Mr. Aikman.

"What's this, Edmund?" said the master, glancing down.

"The right hand of fellowship!" said Edmund awkwardly.

Mr. Aikman laughed at last. He grasped Edmund's hand and shook it. "Edmund, you are a companionable little cuss. Good night!"

XIV

GOD TEMPERING THE WIND

OF all the astonishing lots that ever befell man, the most astonishing was the lot that befell Edmund on a day of the autumn when he was eight years old.

His uncle sent for him to come to him in the library. "Edmund," he said, "are you aware that your mother is about to become Mrs. Kinney of Newark?"

"Will I still be her little boy?" questioned Edmund, after an anxious moment.

"Of course you will still be her son; she is your mother whomever she marries. The difference is this: that whereas now you have no father, when your mother marries Mr. Kinney, he will stand in your father's place; he will be a father to you. Have you any message to send to Mr. Kinney?"

Edmund's color came and passed like breath on a pane. He was bewildered with excess of joy. Another father! He had overheard it gossiped that his mother was to marry now this gentleman and now that, but none had told him that the gentleman whom she wedded would be his father!

"When you write to him," Edmund at last replied, "tell him that I love him already!"

On the sixteenth day of November of the year 1841, Edmund's mother was married to the Honorable William Burnett Kinney, owner of the *Newark Daily Advertiser*; and, as the bride records in her "Journal," she went the following week with her husband to see her little sons and to spend Thanksgiving Day.

Very grand indeed felt Edmund in his possession of a new papa. The father whom he had known in babyhood was slight and lithe. Mr. Kinney was stout and straight and stately. He cut off the tips of the bittersweet vine with his cane as if they nothing mattered. He trod the ground impressively; his foot had no more sensibility than his boot for trifles. He crushed

Charlie's toy soldier under his heel and did not guess it. Edmund treasured that little crushed soldier. Even his guardian, whom he respected greatly, would have been aware that he was treading on something and would have halted. Edmund felt instinctively that Mr. Kinney would stop at nothing short of his own bulk.

Every blind around the Green was closed as the Honorable Mr. Kinney passed — ladies were peeping between the slats at him. The parson preached his Thanksgiving sermon to empty minds; everybody's wits were gadding. Everybody was thinking of the bride and groom, and each was telling himself that Elizabeth Dodge had kept her weather eye open. The Stedman household, conscious of the fresh feather stuck in the cap of its prestige, was pleased. But Edmund was a deal prouder than they all. The birthday shilling that he had been hoarding to present as a wedding gift to his mother he put into his pocket. Money within touch, he felt more in keeping with the honor of walking behind Mr. Kinney.

Later in the day, when Edmund escorted Mr.

Kinney along the Green to the store, Mr. Fuller ran on ahead to unbar the shutters and open the door. This walk was Edmund's first chance to be alone with his new father, and he sparkled with devotions. When Mr. Kinney inadvertently hit him with his cane, Edmund confided to him that it did not hurt a bit, — that he liked it.

Conversation did not flourish.

"Let me see," said Mr. Kinney, after a ponderous silence, "you are eight years old, are you not, Edmund?"

"Going on nine," answered Edmund, skipping beside him. He had been saying "going on nine" since his anniversary morning not yet seven weeks gone by.

Edmund's correction appeared to close the subject. Mr. Kinney was silent once more.

"I can let you have a chew of tobacco, if you would like it," spoke up the little lad who was so eager to be a son to him. "I have a piece of a plug I found in front of Peck's, and I'd love to give it to you."

"What I have in my mouth, Edmund," said Mr. Kinney with dignity, "is a piece of lovage."

"But if you would rather chew tobacco, you need not mind me," persisted Edmund. "I have never chewed," he went on confidently, "'cept Ladies' Chewing Tobacco. Do you know Ladies' Chewing Tobacco? It is a soft, white, freckled flower that blossoms in the spring, and after you have chewed it quite a while, you can spit just as if you had a regular quid. Sometimes the stalk is doubled up as if the flowers were laughing, — but don't you eat them when they are wrinkled! They have teeny green bugs under the leaves! I did not know it at first."

Silence.

"Would you like to have me call you 'father'?" he inquired, after a wistful interim.

"Edmund, you may address me in whatever way you think proper," replied Mr. Kinney.

"Well," said Edmund, sighing, "perhaps I had better call you Mr. Kinney — until we are better acquainted. But if I should write to you, I will call you 'father' in the letter."

At the store, Mr. Kinney drew out a roll of greenbacks, and Mr. Fuller had no change, having parted with his cash the night before

to Mrs. Whaley, who came with a five-dollar note.

"How much money do you want, Mr. Kinney?" asked Edmund, diving his hand into his pants' pocket, as if into a mint of silver.

"Twenty-four cents, Edmund," said the gentleman, and out sprang Edmund's shilling joyously.

"Never mind the penny," said Mr. Kinney to Mr. Fuller; — and to Edmund, "I'll make it all right with you, my boy, — I have plenty of change at the house." But he never paid Edmund back his shilling; he never thought of it again.

When Edmund and his new papa set forth towards Fuller's store, Edmund's hand, like a tendril in the wind, hovered airily around Mr. Kinney's ready to cling at a touch. When they returned, Edmund's legs lagged; his arms hung as if wilted. Mr. Kinney went directly to his bride and stationed himself beside her on the sofa. Edmund lingered shyly at the threshold for a moment and then walked off to his room.

In his room he found Charlie seated on the floor, trying to surmount the mystery of winding a top which the visitors had brought him.

Edmund stood and looked at him. "Charlie," he questioned earnestly, "do you know that that beautiful lady is our mother?"

Charlie nodded.

"When you kiss her, she kisses you back. Wouldn't you like to live with some one like her all the time?"

Charlie nodded; artless, innocent sage of six, what else was there to do?

Edmund grasped him by the shoulders in despairing fierceness. "Charlie, are you going to let her go?" he demanded. "Don't you know that she is the only mother we have? Don't you know that if we let her go away without us, we will never be her little boys again, — never, never?"

Charlie nodded. Charlie, Charlie, what an unresisting, angelic little wight you were!

Edmund shook him, — Edmund unstrung with inward sobs. "Go talk with her, I tell you. Don't you know that you are her little baby? She may listen to you. Don't you know that God sent you to her to comfort her when He was going to take away our true papa? Haven't I

told you that she said it? Put your arms around her, Charlie; tell her that you are her *baby!* ”

“Yes,” said Charlie softly, but on the doorsill he turned back and shook his head.

“She don’t want us,” he said guilelessly, and nothing that Edmund could say prevailed on him to intercede. He sat down on the floor and went on with his labors over his top.

To Edmund, Charlie seemed no longer a brother but an unrelated, gentle waif too silly-witted to feel a loss or fight against it. Edmund’s new papa, his mother, and now his brother — all he loved was slipping from him.

But he could not keep away from his mother. He would talk to her about her new husband; that seemed the topic uppermost in her mind.

He entered the room very delicately. She was sitting alone. At the sight of her fair, beautiful hand outstretched to him, he forgot his studied part, and ran to her.

“Mother — mother,” he murmured, with his cheek against her shoulder.

She drew back her head the better to see her boy, and instantly he remembered himself. “I

won't cry," he told her. "You need not be afraid, Mother. I will not let a single tear fall on your pretty dress." He stroked her shoulder, his eyes following his fingers with fain, expressive glances.

"Do you love me, little son?"

"Oh!" was all he said, and he stood with in-drawn breath and quivering chin. Then he slipped down by her chair, with his head against her knee, but with his coat sleeve drawn safe across his lids. When he lifted his head, he whispered, "I should judge that you have married together with a very fine man." He was remembering his part! "Is my new papa a governor?"

Elizabeth smiled, self-pleased. "I think I have done very well. No, Edmund, Mr. Kinney is an editor. He read my writings, and that is how he came to seek me out."

"I heard Joab, the new man who does our chores, say that a mole could see that Miss Elizabeth had the governor right under her thumb, and I thought Joab meant Mr. Kinney."

Elizabeth laughed mirthfully. "I am not sure but that Joab did mean Mr. Kinney!"

Edmund's eyes shone lustrous through return-

ing mistiness. "You belong to Mr. Kinney now, don't you, Mama?"

Elizabeth laughed her musical laughter. "Or Mr. Kinney belongs to me?"

"But Charlie and I belong to you; we belonged to you first, didn't we?"

There was no gainsaying it, and because there was no gainsaying it, he climbed beguilingly into her lap and, with his hand upon her heart, caressed her bosom with his hand.

"Edmund, you are an adorable little lad — you are so loving; do you know it? You are an *embodied caress!*"

He could not tell what to say. But in the earnestness of his love for her, self-consciousness was not in him.

"Mother, your eyes are the color of the little blue flowers in the meadow that look as if they were sewed in cross-stitch."

"You pretty Imaginer! You mean the bluets."

"Mother, I can do cross-stitch. Mother, when I am a man, I am going to buy you a dress, and I am going to cross-stitch it all over with little blue eyes."

Eager, innocent darling — already embroidering the blue fields of her eyes with the shadows of his own.

“Mother, do you love Mr. Kinney very, very much?”

“Why, yes, Edmund, I love him. But you see, my darling, I had to think and plan for the future. It was necessary to consider your welfare and Charlie’s, — and mine also. You will understand it better when you are older.”

“I can understand anything that is explained to me!” he said in a child’s pure wisdom. She enclosed his fondling hand in hers and tapped with it lightly on the chair-arm. Her veined, veiling lids alighted on her cheek.

“Mother needed some one to love and care for her, Edmund. Mother was all alone in the world.”

His hands sprang to her temples to compel attention. “I *tried* to come to you,” he cried passionately. “Don’t you remember that I wrote and told you? Mother, I was almost there!”

“But you are only a little boy.”

"It was God that made me little. But I can take care of you, Mother. I will sit all night and watch over you; and when you take your nap in the afternoon, I will not let a fly come near you. And, Mother, I would have married you myself, but Tom told me that the United States wouldn't let me because I was your son! Mother, don't you see?"

His deep eyes shone like twin lamps newly lighted. She could not bear to put them out.

"Mother," he pleaded, "I can love you although I am so little. Darling," he whispered in touching worship, remembering that it became him to entreat her as a lover should entreat his dear one, "I will love you all over! I will walk with you under the rose tree, and enfold you in my arms, and not speak; but just say — Oh — Oh."

With a stifled moan she hid her face in his hair: but at length she half withdrew her lips, and when she did withdraw them, she said steadily, "Edmund, I would take you to live with me, if it were possible. Do you not know that I would? But Mr. Kinney has a grown son of his own already. He might not take

it kindly from me, if I had you around the house."

"But I will fight him, if he isn't kind to you," cried Edmund, starting up in a ferment. "I fight all the fellows that pick on little Charlie; I don't care how large they are. And when the big Spaniard gets me by the head, I kick him in the shins!"

"But listen, my son. These are excellent Christian people with whom you live. You have plenty to eat and are comfortably housed. Why are you not content to stay here and be happy?"

Was it possible that she did not know! He locked his hands behind his head in unreconciled restraint! He was trying to be manly, but again his chin was quivering, his eyes were filling. "Mother, I think it must be — because I belong to you!" The hands that had been locked were flung around her neck. "Mama! — Mama!" he sobbed in abandon, "when our pastor preaches, 'Can a mother forget her suckling child?' I always know that he means that she cannot, — and I always know that it is you!"

"I forget you? Never, never, my baby, my Poet-boy! But oh, my child, I am so helpless!"

And there in the doorway towered Mr. Kinney, frowning.

"Edmund," said that gentleman, "you would best go out and play."

Play! — tear-splashed.

"Mrs. Kinney needs to lie down and rest," Mr. Kinney added, when Edmund did not stir.

"You are going, Dearest, aren't you?" whispered Elizabeth to her son.

He nodded.

"And you are going to be brave and bright," she babbled, laying her soft lips to the shell that was his ear; "you are going to be a gentleman, and if God wills, a poet? Above all else, you are going to be honorable?"

It was their secret, — hers and his, — he whispered "Yes."

The brow of the groom, who stood aloof and alien, darkened. Man that he was, he was jealous of the orphaned child.

But Elizabeth, the young bride, held fast her first-born for a moment more. Lingeringly she

kissed him. "And Edmund, you do not think hard of Mother?" she pleaded.

Edmund, spent with the pain of his loving heart, slipped gently to the floor. "Mother," he said in winning sweetness, "*I think that you are very kind to little boys!*"

XV

FULLER'S STORE

FOR a fortnight, Fuller's store gave the go-by to political wranglings in order to gossip over Elizabeth Dodge Stedman Kinney's marriage, husband, and visit.

Edmund, perched on the counter, dealt out details gloryingly. "My mother," he boasted, "why, my mother could have married a lot of men. But it is against the United States to marry more than one man at a time. My mother could have married all the men in New Jersey, if it had not been for the United States. There was one gentleman named 'Esquire' — I know that he was in love with her. I heard my Uncle James say it. But he died, so she married Mr. Kinney. Mr. Kinney is real nice. When my mother says to him, 'Pick up my thimble that I have dropped,' he gets down on his knees and

searches till he finds it. My Aunt Abby makes her curls with quince seeds, but God curled my mother's hair. My mother's hair is like the sun when it begins to shine through the trees before you are out of bed in the morning, and you squint at it. If you pull a curl of hers out straight and then let go the end of it, it will wind around your finger in teeny, teeny, golden curls, ever so many of them, — millions of them, I guess. My mother's curls cling just like babies' fingers; but they look like gold. I shouldn't be surprised if they were some kind of soft gold like the gold that the angels have in heaven. The streets in heaven are gold, and there is no weeping there nor any tears. If an angel slipped down, a little young girl-angel that could not fly very well, she would hurt herself if the streets were hard, and she could not help crying just a little. So I suspect that God makes the gold soft like moss. My father left me a fortune. I heard our Joab say to Sambo, 'I swan, the Judge is making a good haul out of thet job; he clears a slick five hundred an-nul.' But Abijam Lewis says that my uncle doesn't make a red cent out of me, not a red cent. Mr. Kinney

hasn't a bit of money that isn't gold. He never carries shillings. I should not be surprised if my cousin Tom espoused Mary Hyde. I saw him look at her. When he becomes in love, he will be desperate. I know cussiderable about falling in love. I told my Uncle Charles that Elizabeth Strong was going to espouse him, and it turned out just as I perdicted. When I was a little boy, I didn't know what twins were. My Aunt Eunice said to my Uncle James, 'James, Charles has twins!' and he said, 'Blessed is the man that hath his quiver full of them.' But twins are babies! I would not like to have very many of them — I'd just as soon have a few. Queen Anne had twenty-four children, and they all became defunct. When I read about it, I said to Joab, 'Joab, I'd be awfully sorry for you if you should have twenty-four little children, and they should be defunct.' But Joab said, 'I should be more sorry for myself if they lived. What would I do with them?' Joab is right. To feed and educate seventeen or eighteen head, especially of twins, would be a cussiderable responsibility."

Queen Anne was ancient history. Fuller's store had heard before from Edmund touching her royal joys and sorrows. Old Dailey sent a squirt of tobacco juice from the pork barrel to the stove, — a good eight feet. It was his way of prefacing a remark.

"Edmund, what is an-nul?" he inquired.

"An-nul is what Joab said," replied Edmund.

The loungers pulled sly faces.

"If you don't know what it means, why don't you look it up in that dictionary of your uncle's which you talk so much about?"

"I am going to look it up when I get the opportunity," replied Edmund.

"Did you look up Jezebel?" asked Mr. Learned's manservant.

"Yes, I did," retorted the boy, flushing. "Jezebel isn't in the dictionary; but 'tiring' is," he added pointedly. Jezebel had vexed Edmund's sympathetic soul immeasurably because if she "tired her head" at the window, he could not understand why she did not draw it in. It was grievous enough to go to dogs as completely as she did, without first tiring one's head.

"Don't tease the lad," interposed Mr. Fuller mildly. "He's learning as fast as he can; he's young yet."

"Dodo has drawn a high old picture of Mr. Peck," resumed Edmund, to get back at Mr. Learned's manservant. "Mr. Peck is stepping into his chaise, and B. J. is pushing him up by the elbow. Dollars are dropping out from Mr. Peck's cuff. Dodo calls it" —

"Aren't you going to read us the newspaper?" again interposed Mr. Fuller. He was the village peacemaker.

"Yes, read us the news!" cried a farmer who had stopped to hear the news read.

They depended on Edmund to read aloud the *Courier* to them. He read a paragraph or two in his fresh treble. He came to the word 'loco-focoism.' He scanned it an instant. "Pickles," he said, and started on.

Ed Harland haw-hawed.

"You need not haw-haw at me; I'm not your girl," remarked Edmund, glancing over the top of the newspaper at the handsome youth.

"Didn't know that Eddie Harland had a girl!" cried a gaffer. "Who's your girl, Eddie?"

With brows drawn down and mouth set fast, Harland stared vacant-eyed out of doors. He looked as if he had never spoken in his life and never intended to speak.


"Harland, you look like a predestinated oyster," piped Edmund in ingenuous honesty.

"I'd rather look like a predestinated oyster than act like a predestined fool, Captain Marryat," retorted Ed Harland, stung to speech.

"Close your shell!" cried Edmund hotly. He had been having too much Marryat from Harland.

Harland closed it. He closed the door also, — closed it on his heels and went out, shrugging his shoulders as he disappeared foot by foot in climbing the rickety stairway to the cobbler who had a room on the second landing. Fuller's store was a rambling building with the butcher in a basement opening on the turnpike, and with Fuller's store proper and the cobbler's fronting on Cross Keys Lane and the Green.

The cobbler was a philosopher and a character. There was always a pair of boy's boots on his



bench, and the boys loafed around while he worked. Sometimes he drove them out, waving his leathern apron and shooin' them before him, or scourging the air with a fistful of leathern thongs. But the boys came back like flies. The cobbler was better than Fuller's store.

"Seems to me, Edmund, I have heard something about you and young Hallett," drawled old Dailey. "Come, now, what was it, Innocence? Didn't he send you down to the wharf to buy a racy book, and what was it you brought back to him? Daboll's Almanac!"

Laughter greeted Dailey's sally.

Edmund turned crimson. "Daboll's Almanac is a very interesting book," he returned sturdily. "I read it. It tells about the tide and the moon and the weather."

"I am inclined to believe you, Edmund," commented the bell ringer.

Mr. Fuller had gone to the cellar, and conversation, rid of his watchful ear, waxed careless.

"Come, Edmund," said old Dailey, and winked at the loungers, "tell us just how it was. How do you get hold of these books?"

Edmund felt that they were making sport of him, but every one looked serious. Setting his hands deep in his pockets, he jerked his hands towards his girth, thrust his tongue into one cheek, and, intent to acquit himself in all points like a man among men, spat out into the group. "There's a fellow in the Strand," he began, "who knows a place in New York where he can buy them. And when he goes to New York he buys them for ten cents apiece, but he will sell them in Norwich for a shilling. Only you mustn't squeal on him. I went down to the wharf, — it wasn't for Hallett, but I won't tell you whom it was for. I told the fellow what I wanted was something racy, and he gave me the Almanac; he said that he guessed that was about my size. Then Hallett — but it wasn't Hallett — got mad and called me a softie."

"Well, aren't you a softie?" inquired Dailey.

"No, Sir, I am not."

"Have you never read one of these books?"

"No, Sir."

"Why not?"

Whetted by the gibes of the old men, the little

lad's wits kindled. "Because I have never had the chance!" he cried, blinking both eyes in an attempt to wink like Dailey.

Guffaws rocked the rafters. The coarseness of the laughter repelled him. The fire in his eyes sank in glowing cloud.

"Besides," he added stoutly, "I don't know that they are good style! I promised my mother that I would never read any books that were not good style. My mother told me that if I read cheap books, I would grow up and never know what it was to appreciate a fine book; I would have to ask other people, 'Is this a fine book?' but I would not be able to tell by myself. She said that instead of having a taste for things that counted for something, I would be content to read trash, and I would become like what I read. My mother says that taste is like a plant, and that it grows if one tends it, but that if one neglects it and leaves it to itself, it will die. My mother says that if I do not take care of my taste, I will lose it; and that if I once lose it, there is not any doctor that can make it come back. I am terribly in fear of losing my taste."

Silence surrounded him. This dissertation on good taste seemed a rebuke to the morals of his audience.

"When I read the Almanac, I was in fear that I might lose what taste I have," he continued in innocent concern, "because I am still somewhat young, so my taste must be young; and so it would not take so much to kill it." He glanced around the group: Dailey, a brutal drunkard murdering his gentle wife by imperceptible degrees and wrecking the lives of his babes; Jackson, a worthless idler; Jim Smith, half-witted; Wetherell whose word was worth as little as his work; a half score of others — loungers and loafers, vicious or thriftless, without ambition and without shame, beneath honor and beneath reproach. It was well enough for them to read bad books. His heart beat high as he looked upon them. He would be a gentleman; he would make something of himself. He would not be as one of them when he grew up. He let himself down from the counter slowly.

"What are you reading now, Edmund?" inquired Mr. Fuller who, emerging from the

cellar hooded with cobwebs, overtook the last word.

"*Paradise Lost*, Sir," replied Edmund. He was a child once more; his grave thoughts made him forget to play the part of a man. "Only I have to place a marker in the pages to tell me where I leave off," he added brightly; "at least, sometimes I do. But I think it is very entertaining when Adam awakened and found Eve. I bet he was surprised! It must have made God sorry to have Eve disobey him. I don't know why she did it." He gazed musingly among the candy jars, — so many of them and so many kinds of candy; at the lowest count, six! "And I like apples too!"

"But I don't think that I would touch one," he continued, "if I thought it was going to bring mortality upon the offspring. But perhaps I would!" He sighed. "Anyway, my Aunt Abby would not have given an apple to my Uncle James, — at least not until it was specked!"

Mr. Fuller was closing up. He closed up when he went home to meals. At night he dropped the bars to the doors and windows, but

at noon he simply latched the door. One by one the loungers drifted out to go to dinner — Mr. Fuller was their clock.

"Will you walk along with me, Edmund?" said the fatherly man.

"I am not going home to dinner, to-day," said Edmund offhand.

"Won't you take dinner with me?"

Edmund shook his head.

"My little Susan was a-baking pumpkin pies when I came away this morning," said the storekeeper.

"Mr. Fuller," said Edmund frankly, "I will tell you how it is. I was a naughty boy this morning. I cursed."

"You cursed!" repeated the storekeeper in sorrowful reproof.

"Yes, I did. Aunt Abby said that I was into some mischief, and I wasn't. I told her I wasn't. And she said, 'Then what are you doing with the hammer?' and I said, 'Oh, drat it!'"

"That was wrong, Edmund, — very wrong." He pressed Edmund's hand fondly.

"My uncle says that I am not to have any dinner to-day."

"Then it would not be right for you to go home to dinner with me," said Mr. Fuller thoughtfully. He went back to the store door and set it ajar. "Edmund, there're some crackers and cheese behind the counter, and if you feel like nibbling a little, help yourself; I don't call *nibbling* eating."

Edmund's pride would have kept him from taking anything that he did not pay for, even if he had been hungry. But he was not hungry. His breakfast of cold pork, with a lecture from his uncle, had not agreed with him. The lecture left a lump in his throat, and the pork a lump in his stomach. He managed to swallow the lump in his throat, and it settled down quite familiarly with the lump of undigested pork. He could still feel the pair, hot, hard, defiant, but quite quiet. They did not stir. "Oh, I'm not hungry," he answered buoyantly; "and, anyhow, I'd better attend to an appointment I have with the cobbler, or I may inconvenience the old chap!"

Mr. Fuller started down Cross Keys Lane, and then turned back.

"You are sure you aren't sick, Edmund?" he asked benignly. "You look a little feverish and kind of peakëd."

"I feel sick in my stomick, but I don't feel sick anywheres else," said Edmund reassuringly, and, inch by inch, his shapely legs disappeared along the cobbler's stairway just as Harland's legs had disappeared.

But Edmund had miscalculated his day; it was no easy matter to keep track of the days when every day save Sunday was a holiday. The cobbler was off for the afternoon, and the big boys hired his loft for the time. They had formed a club called the Desperado Gang, and they had made arrangements to meet in the loft whenever the cobbler was taken by a providential cold, or was tending his garden, or away on errands to the Landing. The meetinghouse sheds offered them shelter while they were forming their club. In fact, the club had been Edmund's idea. And now that the gang was organized and housed, his mates had left him out!

He observed that Bond, who had mounted just ahead of him, dealt the door three crisp raps. Edmund rapped in like manner. Little George was doorkeeper and opened the door stealthily. Edmund peered into the room. There before him in life and blood was gathered a downright desperate-looking company, — brow-beating reprobrates seated around a table. Their hats were pulled down over their brows. Mason was dealing cards. He whipped out each card with a charm that would have incited a saint to be a sinner.

"Hello, Baby!" exclaimed Legs Porter, catching sight of Edmund. "It is you, is it?"

Edmund walked in, full-chested. "I'm no more a baby than you are, Porter," he answered back and gave the unsuspecting Legs a side shove that sent him sprawling. He seated himself in Legs's chair.

Everybody laughed.

"Order!" cried Harland; "or the police will be upon us!"

Every one was as still as the grave.

"Didn't know you, Harland," remarked Edmund.

Harland's own mother would not have known him. His hair was dragged down to his eyes. His collar was turned up. He slouched in his chair. He looked the very cut-throat.

"What are you playing?" inquired Edmund.

Cards were being laid down and taken up again with impressive violence. Words were hissed back and forth. Every lad watched his fellow with dark, suspicious glances. Every man's hand was against his brother. All was mystery — villainous, intense, but nothing seemed to get any "forrader."

"Never mind what we are playing," said Little George portentously. He felt mightily pleased that he had been included in the gang, but was in momentary fear of the parson — ten miles away in Hebron!

"We are gambling," spoke up Alphabet Sherman.

"Well, where's your money?" questioned Edmund. He knew a thing or two about gambling. He had watched the men behind the blacksmith shop gamble.

"Bring on the drinks," exclaimed Mason with a flourish.

"Give me my chair," cried Legs who, now that he was on his feet, was a demonstration of his nickname.

"Then I'll have the table!" cried Edmund, who would not be downed. Springing to the middle of the age-blackened board, he stood aloft on it. Little regard was paid to him; Windy Briggs had fetched forth the bottle. It was grim and ugly.

It was a fit bottle for such a gang. Each of the boys in turn lifted it to his lips and pretended to swallow. Tears sprang through their lashes, they shut their eyes so tight. Harland held his throat with his hand and beat his chest as if he was on fire.

Edmund stamped upon the table in wild excitement. "Drat!" he cried, it was all so desperate and devilish.

Captain Kidd who houghed the hamstrings of the haughty, who stirred eyeballs instead of plums into his Christmas pudding, who would have thought nothing of using shin bones for paling-pegs, was not a circumstance to the meekest of the gang.

"Here, Baby," cried Legs. He reached behind him to the bucket, laid hold of the cocoanut dipper, and dishing up a draught of water, handed it to Edmund.

With one fling, Edmund sent the water into Legs's face. Everybody cheered him. He brandished the dipper airily.

"Where're your wits, Legs!" cried the gang. "He's too rapid for you!"

Edmund was transported with triumph at appearing the man.

"You haven't got the cork out!" he shouted suddenly. He had spied the truth. "You've borrowed the bottle from the captain's nigger, and you are afraid to open it! You've promised to give it back again;—that's what you've done!"

"Shut up, you Baby!" cried Little George, red as if to burst.

It was true that they had borrowed the bottle; they had given Sambo ninepence to filch it from the captain's cellar and loan it to them for the day.

"'Baby' me again, and I'll 'baby' you!" cried Edmund, beside himself.

"*Baby!*" retorted Little George, and held the bottle tauntingly just above Edmund's head.

Edmund sprang into the air to snatch it. He was quick, but for once Little George was quicker. Edmund sprang again, and as he sprang, he aimed a blow at the bottle with his dipper.

There was a crash of glass — a headlong gush; down came the contents of the bottle. Heavens — it was *Barbadoes*! Down it came, — a quart of it, — a fiery baptism over Edmund's head, over his shoulders, down his spine. It trickled from his trousers; it ran to the floor. Blinking, he stared out at his mates from under brows that dripped.

He stepped from the table to a chair and from the chair to the floor. He was as white as death. He lifted the latch and walked out. No one spoke to him; no one had the sense to think to save him; no one went with him; he was a walking delegate from Perdition; he would set the town on their scent. He would "squeal" on them. The truth would out; the *Barbadoes* was out. The *Barbadoes* was on parade! The gang was appalled.

Harland alone had the force to gather up the cards. The gang would have left them and the broken bottle to tell the tale after Edmund had told it.

Edmund passed Fuller's store more dead than alive. He reeked of Barbadoes. He came to Mr. Lathrop's Tavern — in his blank terror not certain where he was. There were no longer any distinguishable places in the world; he made road and sidewalk alike by his presence. He profaned the neighborhood wherever he passed. He left wet spots whenever he stood. His own goal, his one aim, was his little room at Deacon Stedman's. It came to him dimly, yet terrifyingly and surely, that his bed had been changed from the ground floor to a tiny chamber over the kitchen. He would have to pass through the kitchen. He would have to leave his trail on the stairs.

He shied through the judge's gateway, lest he touch it. No one was in the kitchen. He crept on all fours up the stairs — to keep the fumes on a low level. He felt hot and cold and horribly dizzy when he came to a standstill in his room.

In the close air, the fumes seemed multiplying. He supposed that he would smell through the remainder of his days. He thought of the next Sunday when he would sit in his uncle's pew, with all the deacons in the meetinghouse holding their noses. The thought of having to go through life with himself was nauseous. He crawled into bed to smother the smell. He dragged the coverlet over him. He began to reek with sweat, and the sweat reeked of Barbadoes. Each pore breathed it. When he lifted the sheet, a puff issued forth like smoke from an oven. Suddenly the lump came back into his throat and brought the pork with it. A convulsive moment, and he was rid of them, but in his weakness and wild nervousness, he hung over the side of his cot as if over the side of a ship. It seemed as if his stomach would never give over its paroxysms of revolting. He burned with fever. He heard his Aunt Abby's footfall on the landing. She came to the door, then turned, and hastened down. Immediately came his uncle, sniffing like a hound. His gray face was drawn with anxiety and wrath.

"Edmund Clarence Stedman," he said sternly, when he strode to the bedside, "you have been drinking!" His voice was doom.

"That's the pork," whispered Edmund, after a wandering survey. And indeed it was the truth; the poor little beggar had had nothing else in the only cupboard that the good God had given him.

"You have been to the Landing!" cried his uncle.

Relieved that his uncle did not demand to know where he had been, Edmund returned his glare with the tranquil countenance of a cherub. His brow cooled. Even in his hour of darkness, when fear and pride beat against him like a blast, it did not occur to him to let go loyalty and shield himself at the expense of his mates.

"You have been frequenting some wretched hole, some disreputable, back-street gin shop. No place short of the most indecent den would sell drink to a child like you — a gentleman's son!"

Edmund gazed at him wide-eyed.

"You are intoxicated!" cried the judge in sudden thunder.

"Am I?" The little lad's tone was edged with unbelieving dismay. His startled eyes were dark with terror.

"Are you?" echoed his uncle in scorn. "You are a dissolute, lost youth. You are not fit for the society of virtuous companions, do you know it? Are you?" he reiterated. "Look at yourself!"

Edmund obediently pushed back the coverlet and gazed at his rum-soaked front.

"I am not talking about your clothes; I am talking about *you*!" cried his uncle in uncontrolled grief. "You are a disgrace to me — to the Stedman name — to your mother!"

Edmund had not thought of the inner disgrace; he had not thought of his mother.

"Oh!" he moaned, as if suddenly cut to the heart. He stared at his uncle. Deacon Stedman turned on his heel — he had gone as he came.

Edmund was alone. Dailey, the town drunkard; Jackson, the ne'er-do-well; loafers, sots, half-wits,

imbeciles, passed in pictured procession before his mind. And he was one of these! Was he one of these, — a disgrace to his mother! — he who had dreamed to make a man of himself for her sake? Slow, scalding tears crept to his eyes. He turned his face to the wall. "Mother, Mother," he kept crying, — "Mother, Mother, I am not a lost youth, — I am not a lost youth!"

But kind Nature, Edmund's only nurse, was near with Slumber her handmaid, and soon he was sleeping deeply — carried for the nonce into one of the many mansions prepared even on earth for little children and for them who bear in their breasts the hearts of innocents.

When Edmund appeared abroad once more, he was wan and thin from fasting and confinement. But he was as cheerful as ever. He had been punished. He felt that his uncle had been avenged. More than that, sun, wind, and soap had freed his wearables from all suspicion of spirits. His hair alone breathed of Barbadoes a little, a very little, when it was wetted. As he passed Fuller's store on his way to see the river, the door of the cobbler's lodge was opened, and

Legs, as awkward on his pins as if on stilts, hurried down the steps and overtook him.

"I say, Stedman," he exclaimed, and gave Edmund a clap on the back, "you're the right sort, you didn't squeal on us; and we have made you an honorary member of the gang!"

XVI

A PARSON OF THE OLD SCHOOL

I WAS two and a half years old when I came with my parents, my elder sister, and baby brother, to live in the old Simon Huntington house at the end of the Green. The windows of our Blue Room, which was never occupied because it was haunted, looked directly across the Around-town Road into the parson's windows. There was only the road between our houses, but there were the Cross Keys Lane, the great butternut tree on the Green, and the New London turnpike between our gardens. We children never gathered the butternuts. I cannot remember that any one ever gathered them, although they fell as free as showers into the two-forked road and over the pale long grass. The parson's presence stood in Sabbath-like guard over everything

in his neighborhood. But the boys' feet kept the grass cropped on the far end of the Green which was beyond the ken of his windows.

The Green was a long-drawn-out triangle, with the apex under the parson's nose, and the base skirted by the Cross Keys Tavern, — the jailer's two keys hanging crossed on a tree in front of his door, in days gone by, reminded the heedless of his calling and named the tavern, — Fuller's store, the Lathrop house, the Academy, and the Union Hotel. But all of these buildings, together with the sacred meetinghouse, the chapel, the whipping post, and the wayfarers at the triple crossroads, were nothing in comparison with one slat in the parsonage shutter.

As I recall the parson, he was as tall as the meetinghouse belfry, and ancient past all possibility of growing more aged. Undoubtedly there were occasions when he donned a hat — Edmund, when he grew to be a man, recollected a gray-white beaver. But his flowing locks so impressed me with a sense of his venerableness, that if his head was covered I took no account of his headgear. Or possibly he loomed so high

above me that I, looking up, beheld his beaver foreshortened and was not aware of its existence. I can see him to-day as plainly as if two decades past were yesterday. He affected a neckcloth after the fashion of the previous century, — a soft, fleckless cambric muffler, fine as cloud, that mounted in indistinguishable folds from his shoulders to his chin. Above the neckcloth protruded stiffly the two points of his immaculate starched collar. He never turned his head or bent it — not to my remembrance. He walked the village like a marble man. To us children, he surpassed the seven wonders of antiquity. No one of us knew when, where, or how, and no one questioned, and yet every one believed that he had broken his neck, and that the surgeons had fashioned a new neck for him out of pure gold, and had amiably stuck his head to the top of it, and soldered his body to the bottom. If Lot's wife had been overtaken by the proverbial salt on a trip across the Green, her remains would have excited little comment. Salt is cheap. But our parson with his neck of virgin ore, was an offering to attract robbers. The first time

that I promenaded to our front gate, after my arrival in Norwich Town, a bevy of school children was waiting to tell me about the golden neck. They showed off the parson as the town marvel. We tiptoed behind him, whispering busily and conferring endlessly. If he should turn his head however so little, — the children told me, — his neck would crack, and his head topple down! What an awful responsibility he was!

Shivering and alone in the Blue Room, I peered out like a young ghost; I was held a prisoner to the pane by the fascination of catching a glimpse of the parson with the golden neck. But I whisked away as quick as s'cat! when I saw him opening his door! If he should espy me, if he should bow to me, his neck would break, and I would have his head, his golden neck, and himself — a tragedy in three parts — on my hands. The thought of having to present myself at the parsonage door, bearing the preacher's august head on a charger, was too appalling to dwell upon, and the event too possible to be risked.

There came a time when there was talk that

the parson was dead ; but could a gold neck die ? Of course not ! Whoever heard of such a thing. My little brother, panting from happy play, was led by an old crone into the darkened parsonage and his dimpled hand was laid on the cold brow of the parson who had lain three days in his shroud. My brother shuddered and then shrieked. Never afterwards till he was a grown man would he go into the dusk alone. I could set my orange inside the Blue Room and, even at high noon, he would not dare to open the door to pluck it forth. He was in terror of the touch of that dead brow. But he was only a baby, he was only four years old ; and his gentle mother had shielded him from frights and taught him that the dark held no dismay.

But whether the parson and his neck were dead or not, none of us ever picked up the butter-nuts. Good Mr. Weitzel, who came to the parsonage after the parson's departure, heard my brother's cart wheel creak as we trudged along under his study windows, and, fetching an oil can, bowed down on all fours for our help — our cart was so tiny and he so tall. He inspected

the axle-tree so gravely, he dropped the oil so painstakingly, that we ourselves were impressed. Moreover, he told us, while we looked on critically, how a trifle of oil had made many a cart wheel run easily.

But Mr. Weitzel was not the parson. If the parson had stooped, he would have lost his head.

The parson was the Visiting Committee of the District. There may have been other worthies on the committee, but throughout his term in office, no one presumed to officiate. The Visiting Committee, with his gold neck shrouded in cambric, appeared in the schoolroom doorway about once in every so often. Instantly the idle drone of voices stopped. The girls began to quake, and the older boys to look defiant. When I was a child, I was not allowed to study, but by the time that my brother was nearing four, I fell into the way of leading him to school, — it was the only means of getting him past the minnows in the brook. He was a handsome, merry child, too mischievous to be controlled, and I loved him. Since I was not to study, I sat on the platform and as monitor heard lessons. I can

see now that I must have been a day of rest and gladness to our schoolmistress who, leaving me in absolute charge, made trips home, or gossiped with a neighbor, or sewed.

When the parson entered the schoolroom, the fall of a pin resounded tumultuously. Without turning his head to right or left, or glancing up, or more naturally down, he took our schoolmistress's chair which she vacated for him.

"Madame, your order is tolerable," he announced after meditating favorably on the death-like silence. "You appear to appreciate the value of discipline. I trust you do as well by the intellectual development of the youth entrusted to you as you do by their deportment."

The most phlegmatic of us shared our teacher's increasing agitation.

He turned to the schoolroom, readjusting his body to the angle. "If seven crows sat upon a tree, and I should shoot three, how many of the crows would remain?" he asked piercingly.

Our wits were stricken. Not a countenance disclosed the intelligence of a mole. Our teacher looked at me imploringly.

My brother, in the lovely words of Herrick, "heaved up his either hand."

"Buddie, you may answer," said the Visiting Committee. An exultant glint lifted his lids.

"Four, Sir," said my brother.

"Wrong!" cried the Committee in triumph.

We looked aghast. We counted it over on our fingers. Our brains were useless.

The Reverend Committee stated the problem over again.

My brother, scarlet and confounded, was still on his feet. He was a sturdy, fearless child with a will of his own, and a mind not given to surrendering unless convinced of an error.

"Did you say you shot thwee, Sir?" he lisped.

"I did."

"And there were seven, Sir?"

"Correct."

"Then there would be four left," said my brother.

"None would be left. If I should shoot three, the rest would fly away."

The Reverend Committee had visited the school.

The Committee descended the platform and walked out.

"I'd kill him if I could," remarked my brother fiercely on the way home.

All the little boys burned to kill the parson. And the grown boys, when they saw him coming, passed by on the other side — his grandchildren among them. We were Priests and Levites together — there was not a Samaritan around the Green.

The parson had no eyes — at least none that I remember. Two pools of lapis lazuli unlighted as a moonless sky in which the last star dies, lay under the shadow of his shaggy brows and beetling lids. His countenance was ruddy but it did not warm. He was Saint Nicholas without the heart of the Saint. If he had carried a pack, it would have been loaded with treatises on Predestination, Regeneration, and Original Sin. He was the last oak in the forest of Puritanism; he stood without verdure. No bird built its nest in his branches. He carried a cane, and the cane was like unto himself — it had a golden neck.

The parson's breath was Anathema Maranatha to a stocking-hung hearth. He set a ban on Popish festivals. Christmas in Norwich Town was barely observed. Raisins, candy, and an orange were the orthodox gifts. We would sooner have desecrated the Sabbath than have celebrated Easter, and we were horribly strict in our observance of the Sabbath. The first person in Norwich Town who dared to send Easter greetings promiscuously and undisguised was Mrs. White from Cleveland, who came upon us Christians much as the Pope might have come upon the Pilgrims. I recall to this day the card she sent across the street to me on Easter morning, and Sunday too!—think of it! It was a picture of a fresh-cheeked Miss in a crimson frock, skipping with a rope of Jacqueminot roses done against a background of burnished gold. I was crazed with joy. I could not contain my ecstasy; I ran about the house, hugging the card and kissing it, and extending it toward every one I met, only to snatch it back as impetuously and clasp it fast, and cry, "It's mine, it's mine!" My mother who was Kentish, and as much out of her

setting in New England as a chime in a sepulchre, was adorable to us little ones. In our lack of amusements, she used to cut out paper dolls, houses, trees, and curious creatures that would have staggered Adam to name. But the damsels that she created were from rude wrapping paper. At the sight of Mrs. White's card, I was utterly without conscience. I flaunted my gay Parisienne in my mother's face; and my mother, more happy in my happiness than I myself, slipped down upon her loving knees to kiss me and my card. Sunday in Norwich Town was a day of absolute serenity in spite of its gloom. With my mother in the house, the day was not unlovely. Even babes were taught to commune with their own hearts and be still. No haste, no stir, no travel; not a sound but church bells calling; no fret, no taking thought for any morrow save Eternity. And before the day's close, we learned a chapter from the prophets. But what the Sabbath was two generations earlier than my day, and with no mother in the house, it is easier for me to imagine than for you.

When Edmund was in pinafores he ran

pellmell when he saw the preacher coming, just as I ran when I saw him. Edmund too was in alarm for the parson's head, although the parson and his neck were at that date in the heyday of their strength. By the time that Edmund was ten years old, he crossed to the north side of the Green if the parson appeared upon the south side. A year or two later, the "gang" cut for themselves hickory staves after the fashion shown them in their parson's. They made themselves high pasteboard collars and swathed their throats in handkerchiefs. They resurrected white beavers in divers attics, and when the parson left home on a Saturday forenoon for the railway station, a bodyguard of six escorted him. Childhood's bewilderment had given place to vague aversion, and vague aversion to intelligent revolt.

The clergyman did not observe them; he was thinking of the sermon which he was to preach in Lebanon in exchange with his brother of the cloth. When he returned Monday noonday, the same stern-visaged, undemonstrative group was waiting for him at the station. He paced the platform, they paced the platform; he took to

the sidewalk, they took to the sidewalk. "Their garb is outrageous!" he said techily to himself, but their garb was precisely like his own. "Those youths should be locked up; they should be flogged!" he said again. But why locked up? They were picking their way heedfully, following exactly in his footsteps. When he reached the bridge across the Yantic, he was in a white heat of passion. He turned on them. But the mortification of it! They all turned. Instead of facing six pairs of mischievous young eyes, he found himself fronting six incommunicable backs! He strode on, stabbing and thrashing the air with his cane, unthinking that just in his rear, six hickory staves were curvetting and plunging as if possessed.

When he preached to his flock the next Lord's Day, I do not doubt that it was on the wickedness of dissolute youth. He certainly complained to Edmund's guardian; he alluded to the ultimate end awaiting a sad and wild career; but he refrained from giving details.

"The parson did not dare to say a word to my father about me," outspoke Asa Wilcox, when

the boys held a conference meeting of their own behind the meetinghouse. "My father would have brought him to the point; my father would have said, 'See here, now, what has the boy done? Put it down in black and white, and I'll take it out of his hide for you!'"

"He did not dare to come to my father," harped Little George.

"What shall we do next?" cried Edmund. It made him uncomfortable to have his guardian's allegiance to him questioned.

"We can stop up the ditch," said Legs. Legs's arms were nearly as long as his pins; he was as good as a pitchfork at shoving sods under the skid.

"We always do that anyway, when it's cold enough," remarked Ed Harland.

Stuffing the Lathrop ditch with sods on the first severe Saturday afternoon was an effectual way of getting the best of the God-fearing deacon, whose precept and practice set dead against laboring on the Sabbath.

"Let's tie a string to the meetinghouse bell-clapper and hide in the rocks, and at midnight

we'll ring the bell like Scotland's-a-burning!" suggested Windy.

"Then I'll do the ringing," put in Edmund promptly. "I've been thrashed three times for ringing the bell, and I've never done it yet!"

"Let's paste verses upon the signposts around the Green Saturday night; then we'll have the best of the parson — he'll have to face them all day Sunday."

"We've done that before," commented Harland with a sniff. "If we are going to do anything, let's have something new; and bear in mind that we aren't children!"

Everybody sighed and sat in a brown study. There was nothing going on — no mirth, no fun, no recreation; no normal outlet for the natural activities of a boy.

"Suppose we ask Captain Ben to take us with him when he goes to haul wood?" proposed Edmund.

"He'll expect us to help him," returned Harland laconically.

"Harland, you down everything that every

one suggests," cried the gang. "What do you say to do?"

Harland shrugged his shoulders. Then they all sighed again. Life was truly dull.

"Let's go to the Dance Hall in the Strand," spoke up Stevens. "I know the fellow that runs it, and he says the girls are stars."

"I've seen the girls," returned Edmund, loyally contemptuous although ignorant; "they are not half as handsome as Margaretta Huntington and Cynthia Backus."

"I would not ring in Retta Huntington, if I were you, Stedman," said Harland.

Edmund had backed the sylph Margaretta straight into an airhole in the ditch, the winter earlier, when his head was turned with skating with her. Miss Retta was furious. She disdained the Around-Town youths, and in her hauteur and beauty queened over even the bloods at the Landing. To be caught abroad with a little lad like Edmund was a blow to her pride. The most that he could do, when he jumped into the hole to pull her out, was to clamber forth again, since she was twice his size; while the fair one, too

exasperated and mortified to save herself, glared at him from her icy pool — circled by petticoats floating and freezing on the wave. And when she did climb out, she flew clinking homeward, regardless of her escort. Unluckily a heartless wag, to whom Miss Retta had given the mitten on an earlier occasion, descried her flying over the fields with Edmund in pursuit. Soon the whole of Fuller's store was laughing. Edmund never again spoke to Miss Retta. He did not dare; no, not after he was a Wall Street broker and was no more in fear of bears and bulls than you and I are of ladybirds. Margaretta was the nunlike Sara's sister; she was sister also to Webster Perit — children of Captain Ben.

"I'm going to the Dance Hall," spoke up Stevens with a yawn and a stretch.

"So am I," joined in Alphabet. "Come along, Steddy!"

"I have an engagement."

"I know your engagement," interrupted Legs. "You are all ready to sneak off now!" He poked Edmund in the ribs.

"Out with your tome; where is it?" cried

Windy, but Stevens had the bookworm by the collar and shook him like a stocking.

"Quit!" cried Edmund good-naturedly and hugged his coat-front.

Stevens set him down. "What is your book?" he asked with a drawl.

"Keats."

"Never heard of them."

"Just wait and I'll read you a page."

The gang sat down, sheltered and warm under the sheds that gathered the sunlight as if in a sheepfold.

Edmund read :

"In a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity ;
The north cannot undo them,
With a sleety whistle through them,
Nor frozen thawings glue them
From budding at the prime.

"In a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy brook,
Thy bubblings ne'er remember
Apollo's summer look ;

But with a sweet forgetting,
They stay their crystal fretting,
Never, never petting
About the frozen time.

"Ah, would 'twere so with many
A gentle girl and boy!
But were there ever any
Writh'd not at passed joy?
To know the change and feel it,
When there is none to heal it,
Nor numbed sense to steal it,
Was never said in rhyme."

Edmund had forgotten himself altogether.
He might have been sitting on his mother's knee,
his eyes so welled with light.

Beyond the belfry, the snow-burdened elms
moved like ships in the sea.

"I like it," said Stevens, weighing his words,
"only it makes me feel blue. It makes me feel
like committing suicide. That's the way with
poetry. If it's poor, it's too poor to read; and
if it's good, it's too good. Cussing and gambling,
and going to the Devil relieve a man; they're
like pulling the bung out of a cask when the
wine is working, but reading poetry is like ram-

ming the bung in, when it's starting to pop already. I'd go to the bad; I'd do something extreme, if I read poetry, — I'd get so cock-full of feelings. I'd like to go to the bad," he added, "or to war, or to something, — anything that's alive! I'm sick of picking up stones in durned old never-ending huckleberry pastures, and listening to the parson."

"That's the way that poetry makes you feel!" cried Edmund. "I'll read you something else, Stevens — wait!"

"Bright Star, would I were steadfast as thou art!
 Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
 And watching, with eternal lids apart,
 Like Nature's patient, sleepless Eremite.
 The moving waters at their priestlike task
 Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
 Or gazing on the new, soft-fallen mask
 Of snow upon the mountains and the moors —
 No, yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
 Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
 To feel forever its soft fall and swell,
 Awake forever in a sweet unrest,
 Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
 And so live ever — or else swoon to death."

"Oh, Lord!" ejaculated Stevens. He smiled a wan smile and let his head slide down on Edmund's shoulder. He was subjugated by his sensations. "I'm going to the dance hall," he cried, starting up. "I'm fizz-full up to my eyes, Steddy, and the bung will pop, if I don't get to moving! Off I am!"

And off he was, striding down the turnpike like an outlaw. And only a few years later, while picking up the stones in the Reverend Wilcox's sheep pasture as I have already told you, he suddenly straightened and, taking one deep free breath of the boundless dawn, was off; and lost to kith and friend till that October day when, literally shot to pieces, he dropped beside John Brown at Harper's Ferry.

XVII

THE GILDED CAGE

THUS it was that the years passed, and that Edmund's brook sped to the river, bearing away his fair childhood on its white shoulders.

When the first frost nipped the noses of the hazelnuts, he no longer arose betimes and, standing in the roadway in front of the Sigourney house, engaged in a fisticuff fight with prospective followers. No, he tumbled the toddlers into a barrow, and with the older children flocking as if at the heels of a second Piper of Hamelin, he mounted the hill, all gaiety and gusto, to discover to them his long-secret find, — a patch of bushes hidden by overgrown sumacs in a field to the south of Farmer Yerrington's pasture patch on the Canterbury turnpike.

Canterbury Turnpike — dear name! Time be-

shrew them that rechristen thee *Elm Avenue*, or *Roosevelt Parade*!

Edmund did not talk so much as when a child. He did not hand out family facts, and, led on by the curious and the idle, discourse upon matrimonial and kindred subjects. The Stedman skeleton stayed where it belonged, and no doubt felt ennuied enough, after its seven fat years of trotting abroad with Edmund and being introduced by him into the genial society of Fuller's store.

In and out of his uncle's house, Edmund came and went as silent as the skeleton itself. The exacting and hot-tempered old Puritan did not understand his nephew, and his nephew did not understand him. The birch, the spiritual go-between, did its best, but it gave out of necessity. It is extinct along the Stedman byroads.

In more ways than the one, Edmund felt sorely his stultifying environment. He was as blithe as a bird, but he was restless for sun and sky. It was his impulse to sing.

He would have been content to bide in the cage, if his uncle would have let the door stay

open. But the zealous deacon must have the door shut and fastened, and whenever the little prisoner fluttered his wings, the keeper stowed the cage in the dark.

Boylike, Edmund accounted that his keep and lodging cost his guardian little; he was too agile-witted not to foot up debit and credit columns for himself. During many an interminable evening, when he sat in the shadow of the spirit-lamp copying documents for his uncle who, whether as Town Clerk or as Judge, had endless papers to be recorded, his eyes lifted to the judge's face and fixed upon the judge's eyes. Did his guardian treat him and Charlie justly? The yearly stipend which he supposed was his own and Charlie's was not spent upon them; was it stored for them? By being very careful of his clothes, would he one day profit by his thrift, and be enabled to take Charlie and make a start in business near his mother? Unhappy questionings troubled him. His pinions were worn with beating against bars. But no answering light softened the steel-gray eye of the staunch patriarch. No message save of business abstrac-

tion met the frank gaze of the young copyist. A look of sufferance passed over Edmund's brow, his lip so instant in smiles drooped waywardly as hour after hour sifted by, and his fine, nervous handwriting flowed behind his pen, and no intimate word was spoken to make the silence companionable or to cheer the monotony. When he dropped into Fuller's store, it was with a reckless laugh.

To tell the truth, he kept Fuller's store in a twitter with his spirits and amusing verses, — verses marked by a joyous truthfulness that set the sedate and suspicious gentry on a cushion of pins and needles. He was mirth itself; even old Chicko, who was supposed to be as blind as a bat and as deaf as an adder, laughed when Edmund laughed. His verses were crude and unpremeditated, but their beat was as sure as the pulsing of Tom the Fiddler's viol string. He dashed off a taking couplet in Lydia Lovejoy's autograph album, and soon all the girls in the village were mad to buy autograph albums and have Edmund inscribe them. Lithe, debonair, and ready-hearted, incredibly shy and incredibly

daring, he was welcomed by a call of "Hello, Steddy, old boy!" or "Hello, E. C.!" wherever he appeared. Everybody was glad to see him coming, everybody except the aforesaid and over-pious gentry who were with him always. They, good souls and wary, prayed with one eye open when Edmund was in the sanctuary. Since the Sabbath morning when he accidentally let his Keats fall over the gallery rail, they felt that he was no respecter of Perkins.

"Land! Master Stedman, ride Meg around the Green if you like!" said the stable keeper jocosely on a day when Edmund hung about the skittish roan as if he longed to mount her. "You can pay me when you come into your property."

Butcher and baker and candlestick maker offered to trust Edmund, merely for the mirth of it. He was so proud and so poor and so ridiculously serious in recording his obligations.

Deacon Stedman laughed grimly when he learned that Dick Staples, the livery keeper, was trusting his nephew. "You'll never get a cent from the boy, I warn you!" he exclaimed in indignation.

"Then the boy will never get a cent!" replied the stableman pointedly. "You can't fool old Dick on a lad or on a hoss. If Master Edmund comes into his own, he'll pay me gold for silver!"

And with the first money that Edmund possessed, he was back in Norwich paying petty bills which all save he had forgotten. He was never done paying imaginary debts. Whoever knew him, knows that throughout his life he went up and down the world as if he were his brother's debtor. He journeyed three hundred miles by horseback and stage in early manhood, to thank an aging lady who in her far girlhood had given him his first copy of Tennyson.

A half-day in the judge's library and a lecture from the old gentleman had a like effect on Edmund. He lit out to Fuller's store, or to the cobbler's, in a mood to feel that being good did not help, and being bad did not matter. Only when darkness came upon the house, when the angel of sickness stayed not his sword for the blood already spilled on the lintel, did Edmund forget constraint. He seemed to understand grief — from some unremembered aforetime. He

stood like a star in the gloom. One who had been Mary's playmate came to him to die on his shoulder; he seemed to understand so much better than her elders what that strange last journey meant.

He was himself also whenever he was out of doors for any length of time, and alone. The hardening influence of uncongenial environment — the chill of feeling that he was an object of disapprobation — melted. He straightened gradually, as you have seen a savin straighten when its head is released from a snowdrift. His heart burst into bloom at the sight of the spring. He sang at the sound of the ripples in the river. He thought that it was the reach and spread of the elms that lifted something within him, but it was something within him that lifted him above the treetops. He traced every stream to its source. He mooned along the Yantic River, not knowing what he sought, or what he found.

He spied the water lily planting her own garden; he saw her coil the stem of her full-bloom flowers into tightening spirals, and draw each ripening seed pod down into the ooze. He contemplated

the father bass guarding the helpless fry. He learned to know the mother bass, and just when and where to find her dozing. He brought home orchises, Arethusa, Indian's Moccasin, and coral root, — "airbs", the country folk called them, — and made bouquets for Annie and for Tom's wife, for Tom was married long ago. He had "espoused" Mary Hyde, just as Edmund had "perdicted"; and Tom and Mary had had a little son, Lewis; but Lewis died. Edmund helped the languishing grub to a comfortable lodgment on the trunk of the Norway spruce and stood solicitously guardful while its sallow coat grew translucent, and, splitting noiselessly, set free the young cicada. And then he stood guard over the cicada until the dewlike beads at its thighs unfolded into wings as blue and frail as smoke from an autumn fire, and the tender body and wonder-wandering eyes gathered texture from the sunlight and breeze.

He tramped to the field where the chieftain Miantomono lost his life. He learned all the legends. Nothing escaped him.

His uncle directed his studies but did not

control them. His mother gave him a volume of Coleridge and added a copy of Byron. Elizabeth was carried away with Byron and, like a child, must send it at once to her Edmund, — or more likely, keen-sighted herself and always level-headed, she trusted his poetic instinct and would not withhold any good thing from his growth. Edmund's guardian, the strict and narrow-minded deacon, would have suffered none other than Elizabeth to give Edmund the books which she gave him. But pretty Elizabeth was doing so well in a worldly way that Deacon Stedman could not find fault with her judgment. Deferring to the Will of a Higher Power, she yet managed to send forward her own will like an advance agent to arrange for her next move. In spontaneity and ardor, Edmund was his mother over again. Byron was the breath of freedom to him. The sunlight breaking on the surf of Greece — the blare of clarion and fife — the canvas clapping its hands for gladness — intoxicated him.

Mary too devoured Byron, — not Mary Hyde, Tom's wife, but Tom's saintlike sister Mary, — seated cross-legged on her bedroom floor before

her highboy, with the book open amid lavender-sweet linen. At the sound of an approaching foot, she rammed the drawer shut and, with flaming cheeks and eyes that burned, fell to the knitting which she held in her lap. And the good aunts never guessed.

The ring of adventure, the keen scent of high emprise, transported Edmund. To him books were the Chariot of Israel and the Horesmen thereof. They were wings. Mr. Coit, his Sunday-school teacher, whom he loved and revered, had been to a hundred foreign ports. Only to see him pass on the street made the deep violet of Edmund's eyes blaze. His spirit burned within him at the sight of an elephant's tusk or a Hindoo god upon a cabinet. When Mr. Coit talked to the Sunday-school class about Jonah and the whale, Edmund listened as to one who has inside information. Mr. Coit was a good man, — Edmund and his mates had decided that point among themselves, and they were right; he was a good man. Across the road from Stedman Manor would have lived Captain Potter, and a stone's throw from the Peck Tavern would

have lived Captain Havens, if the two had been content to live on land. What wonders must there not be in the deep, when Captain Havens could be enticed to leave his fortnight's bride, the belle of the town, and sail away on a three-year whaling voyage! Next door to Mr. Coit lived Mr. Thomas. His house was also enchanting with sketches of naked savages. Naked savages! there was something about a native, naked savage that brought blood to Edmund's eye.

The practical and the romantic were bedfellows at Norwich Town, and Edmund took his half in the middle. He alluded to the Orient as familiarly as if he had come to Norwich on a monsoon. He gave Particular Perkins a black eye, because Particular questioned whether Edmund's mother was, as Edmund maintained, more beautiful than an Asiatic siren. Edmund was furious for his mother's reputation as a beauty.

For a moment after worsting Particular, Edmund was too dazed to realize his victory. Then he sat down with a thud, and surveying Particular, repeated, "My mother is more beautiful than an Asiatic siren."

Not a word from Particular.

"In a *hay-rem*," added Edmund by way of emphasis.

Particular gave no sign.

Edmund began again :

"I've lived at ease in Libya,
Where maidens all are fair.
I've viewed the hay-rem's beauteous flock.
For them I do not care.
My mother she is lovelier far
Than all the other ladies are."

It was a stanza from his latest poem.

A spasm shook Particular. But he might have been a deaf mute ; he made no response.

Unresting and untiring, Edmund's fancy strayed everywhere. In his unconscious quest for what was not, he was easily unmindful of barren dreariness. His hill-shadowed bed chamber was now the City of Brass and now the Palace of the Alhambra ; the gutted dip against his wall was the sevenfold candlestick ; he had only to turn the leaf of his book, and he was swept through time and tide and stranded on Galapagos ; he had only to hear Mr. Coit say *Guerilla*, and he

himself was riding à la Espagnole from Demerara to Vera Cruz. Everything was actual to him. He did not merely read the *Eve of St. Agnes*; he was the Moor, laden with lucent syrups tinct with cinnamon. He was Sir John Franklin, and the Spy, and Alexander Selkirk; he was Roland Græme and Roderick Dhu and Captain Bonneville; he was piteous Lear and compassionate Cordelia both in one. The story of the young king seated solitary on a throne who, having a wife was yet wifeless, and who was youthless although a youth, haunted him. Each year that he lived he remembered the story more clearly. But when he came upon felicity pictured on a page, or freedom mirrored in a word he was once more like a sloop with her keel greeting the sun and with her beam drinking the sea. He has often told me that woes more crushing or happiness more piercing never burdened or blest his later years. He has told me that nothing is sweeter than young joy, unless it is peace, and that no horror exceeds the nightmares of childhood save fear, the most terrible of all the emotions which clutch the heart of man.

He hurried just as he hurried when a child. He was in haste to reach the future, a future with his mother. When he brooded, his days were lonely — his loved one seemed indefinitely removed. When he was glad, his days were days of immeasurable fulness. The future seemed at hand.

Over all was his love for poetry, his passion for immortal excellence; an unconscious outreaching desire for perfection victorious over change. Lying under the shade and light of the elms that arched the burial ground, he gazed at their gnarled, far fingers clasped against the inscrutable sky. He looked upon those mighty trees as though they were deathless, and yet, as he pondered and dreamed, tears grew in his eyes and splashed down his cheeks to the grass.

The certainty had begun to stir within him that it is in men to be more than earth that perishes. He had begun to dream that he might live when the trees of the field were sod.

XVIII

THE SNOWS OF YESTERYEAR

UNDER the Stedman rooftree it seemed as if little children were always dying. Mr. Charles Stedman grew worn and stoop-shouldered, peering into tiny graves to see if they were rightly fashioned. Beth, his patient wife, often caught her breath as she sat sewing and, clutching some useless sock to her bosom, leaned sobbing against the wall. First and last, there was baby Bessie, just old enough to lisp :

“ Gentle Jesu, meek and mild ; ”

and then May, one year older ; and Henry Bull, named for good Doctor Bull ; and Charles Henry — but Charles Henry did not die until he was past five years old, which was so advanced an age for Stedman children that his mother was thankful and so hopeful ! Then Frederick Strong

died; and afterwards the baby Edward Strong, on the evening of his only fête-day; — all of these Charles Stedman's children, and not one of them, save Charles Henry, had seen the spring come thrice. Surely it was never planned to take so many little children from one mother. Perhaps there was a mistake among the angels, or some ignorance among them that watched their cradle. But there was One who must have cared, who finding none amid His Shining Legions to handle the pretty babes as knowingly as she who bore them, fetched their mother to them; and around her feet they lie, in the burial ground, like a swathe of budded flowers.

Then Mary, Tom's wife, died; and within a year Tom died; stalwart, wind-ruddy Tom who had never known a sick hour in his life, and who, after Mary's burial, rode forth in stoic strength like a prospering Esquire, while everybody whispered that he had his eye out for another help-mate. Stalwart, season-hardened Tom was taken sick with Mary's cough and was gone like a flaw of snow in April.

Deacon Stedman bought a plot in the new

cemetery that was laid out along the boys' swimming pool in the Yantic River, — a fairer slope than it is to-day, when the city fathers filch its loveliness inch by inch and bury it under refuse.

"Our plot is four times as large as anybody's else plot," Edmund boasted when it was bought. "My uncle's plot is four ordinary plots. And I shouldn't be surprised if it wasn't large enough now!" he added, when he saw that he was making an impression. "But as I told my uncle, the little ones don't take up so much room as the grown-ups, and when two die the same day, we can bury them in one grave, the way we buried the twins."

There is supposed to have been a general conviction around the Green that it was vastly nicer to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. But although Edmund preferred the feasting, he took the funerals philosophically. He liked to have his family in the lead; and he did not hesitate to speak right proudly that his uncle had the finest funerals and the most funerals in the town; that his uncle could beat everybody

in the line of having funerals and doctors. When a spring passed with no funeral to mark it, Edmund felt abashed and untrustworthy, and not until August, when the twins died, did he feel that his uncle's reputation was retrieved. Aside from making double amends for lost mortuary laurels, the death of the twins arrested his thoughts very little. He was even fretted and harassed because of having to give up time to the obsequies. At the grave, he stood first with his toes turned out like the parson and then with his toes turned in like pigeon-toed Lathrop; and he yawned profoundly. You see he was in the midst of reading the *Arabian Nights*; and reasonably it was of much less moment to have two babies sicken and sleep than to be forced to leave Ali Baba in the cave of the Forty Thieves. Edmund's heels were set in graveyard clay, but his heart was in Arabia.

Yet when he was back at his book, or was saying *Sesame* to the darkness as he dreamed awake in his bed, the faces of the twins, — pale against their one pillow of immortelles, — emerged strangely from the time-yellowed page, or from

the gloom of his bedchamber's unlighted night and drifted before his eyes.

When Lewis, Tom's firstborn, died, the third summer after the death of the twins, and just a year afterwards little Henry followed, Edmund had an uncomfortable sense of concern steal upon him, and he stared at the flower-coverleted little form, thinking of the painted bob that he tucked beneath the tiny fingers, and which the baby fingers did not take. It was well enough for girls to die, but it was another matter when Turville dropped top and kite, and too weak to lift his hand, lay with his head in Annie's lap, while his mates took turns in making him ready for bed.

At night, Edmund roused himself from sleep to draw the coverlet over his brother Charlie, and by day he slackened his pace to Charlie's; but he clapped him on the back and cried, "Stir your pegs, old Codger; don't be a milksop!"

Charlie — a milksop! an orphan, ailing in an alien house and never once repining.

An unforgettable happiness came to Edmund during those latter days of his childhood. Seven

years had passed since the Thanksgiving when his mother came to visit him and brought with her a new husband. Now she returned — not for an hour, or a day, but for a visit! — and brought two darling little girls. They were Edmund's half-sisters. Clementine, the older, had eyes much like Edmund's, the same deep violet, with dark lashes, black by contrast with her shining hair. She did not look in the least like her father. Neither did her baby sister, Mary. Edmund, Charlie, Clementine, Mary, and pretty Elizabeth herself, looked like a family of five children, and Honorable Mr. Kinney did not appear to have any part in the affair. I dare say that he looked upon their youthfulness as the sea of his severance. Edmund did not hang about his mother as once he hung about her, for the reason that she had her little daughters, and that he was the brother of two little girls who were to be guarded and escorted. But his eyes lifted to his mother's eyes with the most adoring love, and it was "Mother, here is a footstool," before she guessed that she wanted it, and "Mother, let me," and her scarf was around her

throat before she felt the night-damp. Mr. Kinney, who was profound but not quick-witted, was beside himself. And Elizabeth would lean towards him and say with tantalizing sweetness, "Isn't Edmund a delight? Did you ever know a lad so tender and so thoughtful, and, Mr. Kinney, have you heard what strides he has made with his books! He reads Latin as easily as English! He is going to enter the University at fifteen — to please his mother, mind you! He is going to try for the English prize, of course, and he will take it too. No one shall outstrip my boy."

Mr. Kinney loved her to desperation. He stalked up and down. He shifted the twin manikins on the shelf with an abruptness which threatened to undo them. But when he strode into the entry, Elizabeth glided to the threshold, closed the door, and turned the key. She must not have her thoughts distracted by outside interruptions when she was helping her Edmund.

Edmund adored his mother; he hung upon her least hint in regard to his studies. When she told him that she expected him to bend

every nerve and effort to becoming a notable man, he was in a seventh heaven of fervor; he forgot play and the passing hour; and when she told him that he must think of others first, that he must not consider his right to study as more important than another's right, he was torn with conflicting self-interest and self-abnegation, and ready to despair. To become great, and to think rather of others than of oneself seemed an impossible combination. But when she whispered to him "Yale", he was silent, for his heart said "Princeton." Enter Yale, a hundred miles removed from her in Newark, when he could be half that distance nearer! He set his heart on going to Princeton.

She overlooked his first drafts of groping verse; she showed him his good points and explained why they were good; she showed him his faults, and told him how to overcome them. Without his knowing it and without knowing it herself, she taught him to be a true critic.

Soon she was telling him that he disclosed promise of doing better work than she had done. Joy-blinded, she kissed his blinded eyes, — she

was so proud, so glad. "My Poet-boy!" she murmured, while his mad blood surged in his ears, and the room swayed around him in his rapture.

The two had many an artless conference together, with head against head over a scrap of paper, and with eyes aglow with earnestness. Mr. Kinney looked upon these tête-à-têtes with an unforgiving countenance; he was of the opinion that Deacon Stedman was responsible for Edmund's education, and that Elizabeth ought not to be burdened.

Burdened indeed — those two lovers, mother and son! Elizabeth locked Edmund alone with her, whenever she was of a mind to have a talk with him. She knew that a mother should respect a young son's confidences. If Mr. Kinney's step was heard in the hallway, she shot like sunlight to the door and, breaking into girlish laughter, flung it wide, and asked him if he was looking for her. And when he said, "No, no, my Dear," she pulled his august head prone with her sparkling fingers and set so playful a kiss on the one spot where his hair had taken leave that for the moment he was willing to walk away aim-

lessly ; and when he walked away, she locked the door again.

Elizabeth knew how to manage her husband. She combined tact, helpfulness, and charm. The uncouth entered her presence and left it, bearing a touch of the patrician. She could not help lifting the lowly toward her level ; she made gods of the great. Perfection was her passion.

I could tell you more of Mr. Kinney, who was a commanding personage in the world of men, although a boyish unbalance smote him at a teasing look from his child-wife. She was irresistibly fascinating. If she had quoted to him, — while unpacking the eighty ball dresses which she brought from the Italian court, — Pope's epigram on Bacon, he would have beamed as if sanctified. He was her willing slave. He suffered excruciatingly from gout, and when his throes were at their worst, bellowed like Bashan. Each time that he underwent an attack, he would say that he could not understand why he was afflicted, inasmuch as he had never had a touch of ill health until that hour. And when he was

well again, he swore that he had never been ill a day in his life, which was just what he should have said, and just what you and I will doubtless say if either of us happen in a like case. He was a downright fine scholar of the old school. He sat up till morning in his library, like the gentleman he was, drank whisky and read Aristotle and Plato. But he came down to eight o'clock breakfast as fresh as may be. During the days in Italy, when Mrs. Kinney was pleasure-driving with him through the mountains, her fat Pomeranian Toto jolted from her lap now and then and rolled to the ground. "*Arretez !*" Mrs. Kinney would say in elegant leisure to her coachman. But to Mr. Kinney she said, "Mr. Kinney — Toto!" and that gentleman, testing the timber's state, climbed stiffly down and trudged back for the Pomeranian who sat in the road waiting for the Honorable Minister to Italy to deposit him on his mistress's knees.

Clementine was a little love, a born coquette. She placed her hand in Edmund's with coy, entrusting sweetness. He lifted her to the arm of

the settle and seated himself beside her. Charlie had taken Mary to himself.

"Clementine," Edmund whispered in spite of his intent to say nothing to make her feel constrained, "won't you be my little girl?"

"No, I won't," said the wee fairy decidedly. Then, with a lengthening glance at the tall slight youth above her, she added yieldingly, "but I will let you be my little boy."

"Shall I tell you a story?" he asked. Story-telling was his chief magic.

"Not about bears," said Miss Clementine quickly, "nor mouses!"

The story ran on pleasantly. Miss Clementine let herself down from the settle's arm to her brother's knee. Her charmed eyes did not waver from his lips, and she sighed when the tale was done. "That was a nice story," she told him. "Boy, do you know any more?" She folded her hands upon her blue sash.

"Wouldn't you like to be my little girl?" he entreated.

"Perhaps," whispered Miss Clementine softly.

And so it was covenanted, and throughout the

bright length of that brief visit, Edmund played that Clementine belonged to him and was his very own.

It was after Clementine had gone away, together with the little sister, the fair mother and Honorable Mr. Kinney, that Tom's wife, Mary, died. And when she died, she left behind her a tiny daughter whom Tom called "little Mary."

Edmund was studying to enter the university that autumn, and through the sultry dog days, he sat in Mary's curtained bedchamber, rocking the baby's cradle. He was comforted for Clementine's loss after a more complete and a sweeter fashion than he had dreamed could fall to him. He droned over his Greek verbs with his head on little Mary's pillow, and his dream-filled gaze fixed on her sleeping lids. He sang lullabies to her of his own making in whispering beguilement; he cooed to her when she cooed, and quieted her when she cried. He spent hour in and hour out with her, and, kneeling while she slept, circled her pillow with one arm, while with his free hand he turned the pages of his grammar. He had felt bitter towards his uncle and aunts, — bitter

toward the whole of Norwich Town, which in truth was crude and stulted to one of his high breed and spirit. But a new life entered his life with his intelligent keen love for little Mary. His life had been as narrow as a well, now it became as deep. He had a live thing to love. He heard his uncle's voice in the orchard; he heard his aunts' footfalls come and go in the busy house. Ah, how good was his guardian to let him sit by little Mary! How kind were his aunts and cousins to let him nurse the babe and tend its cradle! He felt poignantly grateful. The possession that he had yearned for was his; his was a fullness of love for which his heart had hungered. To have a little child all of a man's own seemed to him the most celestial bliss that God could bestow on mortals. He kissed the clinging fingers. His smiles rained down upon the hair-drift on the pillow.

And little Mary slumbered; and, not lacking for a mother's love, little Mary waxed strong.

XIX

THE DOORSTEP

It was in the Old Academy at Norwich Town, the second year before Edmund went to Yale, that he made his initial appearance as a man among men. Anna G——, a newcomer at the Green, was the first young lady in his life to take him seriously.

The academy at the Landing, where Ed Harland prepared for college, was held by Mr. Pettis on the second floor of a columned house in School Street that overlooked the town and half the county. It was the school of the bloods. Edwin Ely, Jim Coit, and Will Aiken — all of whom became generals during the Civil War — also attended. Tom Harland, Dan Gilman, Don Mitchell, Ike Bromley, and Jonathan Trumbull widened, first and last, the circle of the gifted and the merry. Mr. Pettis did not whip.

On the hillside topping Pettis's Academy was an excellent free school kept by Mr. Joseph Thurston and Miss Gilbert. Mr. Thurston and Miss Gilbert, he in front and she following hard upon him, bent almost double as they toiled up the perpendicular path of rolling gravel on their way to their school. Just far enough to their rear to be out of reach the bad boys pursued them, mocking.

“Old Joe! —

Old Joe! —

Old Joe kicking up ahind and afore!

Miss Gilbert kicking up ahind Old Joe!”

Old Joe flogged, birched, rattanned, made untoward pupils toe the mark, and what was worse, sent them upstairs to Miss Gilbert to endure the punishment of standing in the middle of her floor among her girls. But to crawl aloft only to find that lovely Mary Prentice was doing penance on the floor, to be condemned to the delight of sharing her ignominy, was the pleasing pain that fell to my father's lot during his one day in the school. His father, my grandfather, at once sent him back to Mr. Pettis. He had

sent his boy to Mr. Thurston to be birched, not to be set among girls.

The Norwich Town Academy was opened in the Old Court House on the Green when the court was transferred to the Landing. Doctor Gulliver, Mr. Aikman, and other dignitaries ruled and feruled in pedagogic succession. They were without competitors in the field. The serene, quaint three-story building gazed east and west through dormer windows. Weeping willows swept the panes with frail tracery, or drew in across the sills like curtains. The stairs were folksy, — dim and worn and easy. Edmund and his mates did not mount in pairs like the elephant and the kangaroo. They straggled along in shoals; for Edmund, you must know, attended the Norwich Town Academy because of Judge Stedman's loyalty to birch as well as to breeding.

To-day Norwich Town has a Queen Anne schoolhouse, — I wish it were defunct! — multi-colored, with a dirt yard and smug maple trees planted at exact intervals on the turnpike. Every one who passed the Old Academy stopped to

look at it. Every one who passes the new school house stops to look at it too!

Edmund was hardly settled in the large room in the Old Academy than he was sent to sit on the girls' side. Anna had no desk so Anna was his victim. As he sat down on the double seat beside her, she folded her skirts with an air of effrontery, and she would let him see that she eschewed wickedness.

"Hello, Anna!" he said softly.

She gave him a stony frown.

He glanced at the sum on her slate.

She rubbed the slate blank.

"I'll do your sums for you; would you like me to, Anna?" he whispered at the risk of being strapping.

She took her Speller, turned her back upon him, and sat with her feet in the aisle.

Anna's ears hid in her hair. They were bits of dawn. Her cheek too was dawning. The minutes were long, and the minutes slow. He filched Anna's pencil furtively, and was vexed by the bare surface of the slate. He

a picture of Anna ; he drew a picture of himself. He set off his own likeness with huge moustaches. At the foot of the slate, he wrote :

“This picture is of *A* and *ME*.
A is my girl, and *I* am *E*.”

“Anna !” he whispered. His whisper was softer than a sigh.

Curiosity mastered Anna’s chilly righteousness. She turned her head a mite. In her simplicity, she gazed at the magnificent moustaches—the bewildering combination of *A* and *ME*, and *I* and *E*, not comprehending. Then it came to her that the lady was she,—she who never broke a rule,—and that the disgraced Edmund called her his girl. Her brow blazed with shame. She was merciless ; she laid the back of her hand against her nose and pointed her forefinger at him.

“Fie !” she said.

He colored to his throat. He tried to meet her glare for glare, but he could only swallow.

After school, when they met in the lane, they were enemies. They detested each other ; they would not walk on the same flagstones. After

a year's rivalry in looks of undisguised estrangement or obtrusive indifference, Anna came unexpectedly upon Edmund as he stepped from the store. Just behind him stalked Particular Perkins. If Anna sniffed at Edmund, Particular would espy it. Moreover, the two had outgrown childishness. Her nose turned up, her lips pursed, but she stayed on the flagstones where she belonged. So likewise did Edmund. They blushed. "Good morning, Anna!" said Edmund, the next time that they passed. "Good morning, Edmund!" she murmured and hastened as if to answer a summons from home.

When April came, Anna in the gush of rosy youth, shot up to the height of the sweetbrier that climbed the garden wall.

"To me, when in the sudden spring,
I hear the earliest robin's lay,
With the first thrill there comes again
One picture of the May.

"The veil is parted wide, and lo,
A moment, though my eyelids close,
Once more I see the wooded hill
Where the arbutus grows.

"I see the village dryad kneel,
Trailing her slender fingers through
The knotted tendrils, as she lifts
Their pale pink flowers to view.

"Hark! from the moss-clung apple-bough
Beyond the tumbled wall, there broke
The gurgling music of the May, —
'Twas the first robin spoke!"

Edmund and Anna listened to the robins. They wandered over Wawecus Hill, searching for the Mayflower amid the lingering snow. Together they sat on the burying-ground wall under the weeping willows, while the orchard behind them rained apple blossoms. Edmund read poetry to Anna, but Anna — the dryad! — did not care for print and paper. She plaited herself a wreath, and with the brook for a mirror, crowned her careless hair. Sometimes she set herself to braiding the grasses that stood around her and so beguiled the time until Edmund should be done. When he finished reading, he would ask, "Was that not beautiful, Anna?" and Anna would answer, "Yes, Ned," not knowing what he had read, or what it was that he asked, and

lifting her eyes halfway to his in timid uncertainty.

And it was beautiful, — the drifting shadow on the sweet air, the solitude of loveliness, and the simplicity of unconsciously passing childhood. Besides, there was the brook flowing sweetly and endlessly, turning from their twin shadow to light on the grassy mounds and gliding lightly to the river.

When Anna loitered in the lane, Edmund happened by; and when Edmund took the path across-lots, Anna happened at the stile.

“Stedman, if you are so smitten on Anna, why don’t you beau her home from meeting tauntingly inquired Ed Harland, who was supposed to have gotten the mitten, since he won beau nobody those days.

Edmund beamed Anna home. When he was older, he set the memory of the snowlit night song. The snowbird was Anna, his dryad the Mayflowers; Maple Lane was the lane past Fuller’s store; and the “Doorstep” was the doorstep of Anna’s house, — the house where I lived when I was a little girl like Anna, and where I first knew Mr. Stedman.

The Doorstep

“The conference-meeting through at last,
We boys around the vestry waited,
To see the girls come tripping past
Like snow-birds willing to be mated.

“Not braver he that leaps the wall
By level-musket flashes litten,
Than I who stepped before them all
Who longed to see me get the mitten.

“But no, she blushed and took my arm !
We let the old folks have the highway
And started toward the Maple Farm
Along a kind of lover’s by-way.

“I can’t remember what we said,
’Twas nothing worth a song or story ;
Yet that rude path by which we sped
Seemed all transformed and in a glory.

“The snow was crisp beneath our feet,
The moon was full, the fields were gleaming ;
By hood and tippet sheltered sweet,
Her face with youth and health was beaming.

“The little hand outside her muff, —
Oh, sculptor, if you could but mould it ! —
So lightly touched my jacket-cuff,
To keep it warm I had to hold it.

278 A NEW ENGLAND CHILDHOOD

"To have her there with me alone, —
'Twas love and fear and triumph blended.
At last we reached the foot-worn stone
Where that delicious journey ended.

"The old folks, too, were almost home,
Her dimpled hand the latches fingered,
We heard the voices nearer come,
Yet on the doorstep still we lingered.

"She shook her ringlets from her hood
And with a 'Thank you, Ned,' dissembled,
But yet I knew she understood
With what a daring wish I trembled.

"A cloud passed kindly overhead,
The moon was slyly peeping through it,
Yet hid its face, as if it said,
'Come, now or never, do it! *do it!*'

"My lips till then had only known
The kiss of mother and of sister,
But somehow, full upon her own
Sweet, rosy, darling mouth, — I kissed her!

"Perhaps 'twas boyish love, yet still,
Oh, listless woman, weary lover!
To feel once more that fresh, wild thrill
I'd give — but who can live youth over!"

On his first holiday from Yale, Edmund called on Anna. Despite dream and desire, he had entered Yale. His guardian's choice was fixed, and his mother acquiesced. He intended to pay his respects to Anna's family, but the elder sister Emily, who let him in, led him straightway to the closed, cold parlor. She felt her way across the room and left him sitting on a horse-hair-covered chair. She had regarded him curiously. Her folk were not considered the equal of the Norwich Town folk; they hailed from a region on the Hudson River. To hail from the Hudson was considered more questionable, if possible, than to hail from Cleveland. Cleveland was at least settled by the Cleveland family of Norwich. Forebears not born in New England are of course little better than no forebears at all. When Emily returned to the parlor, she brought Anna and a tiny spirit lamp. She placed the lamp on the high mantle-shelf. Anna placed herself on the chilly sofa beneath it. Emily retreated circumspectly, latching the door behind her. The sounds of family bustle in the kitchen came to a hush. Edmund sat still and

erect on his black chair. Through the closed doors, the measured voice of the grandfather clock could be heard, telling the moments soberly.

"I have heard tell that it is very fine in Yale," Anna at last murmured.

"We have registers," said Edmund. The furnace in the university chapel fascinated him. He spread his hands in its warmth whenever he was unobserved.

She spoke again. "I have heard tell that you are very smart."

He stared at the lamp. How kithless and mortal it seemed! Its tristful ray and Anna's pensive face each lighted a niche in the lifeless room. He could think of nothing to say.

"We have registers in the chapel," he repeated, after another long silence. "In my room, I have a wood stove, but we don't have a fire in it now. We have burned all our wood, so we have to wait till next term."

"I suppose you are sorry to come home," said Anna plaintively. Poor little Anna! Without her whilom comrade, her days were like an emptied cup.

"Everything around the Green seems slower than it used to be," replied Edmund.

It was true. Everything was slower without Edmund. The grandfather clock reflected for a moment and then ticked, "Yes." The slow sound of its ticking gave Edmund a feeling that he had tarried as long as was mannerly for a first call. He arose, shook hands with Anna, and stepped into the star-soft night. He walked back and forth through the Hollow where he had scurried as a child. He felt unsatisfied and yet at peace. Under its silvery shield Bobbin-Mill Brook — his brook — sped from his feet onwards to the river and called to him as it ran. He thought of his mother, his books, his future. He could outdo his classmates without striving. "When I am twenty-one, I shall be free," he said aloud; and the ripples sang under the ice. By delving and dallying in the offices of the *Courier*, he had learned the making of a newspaper from start to finish. It was his secret, his surprise for the mother he loved. Soon, sooner than his dear one dreamed, he would try his fortunes in a city office as a writer; he would live near her at

last ; perhaps even have a home where she might visit him ; and he would make his home so fair that she would wish to linger. Charlie, sensitive, refined, considerate Charlie, should live with him too. Perhaps — who knew — he might have little Anna for his wife. On and on, his musings ran to the river, and above his plans hung the thought of his mother, a luminous sky arching its stars above the hills.

Already he was foregoing play for poetry. I have his boyhood's own book with his pencil lines around the words,

*Quod si me lyricis vatibus inseris
Sublime feriam sidera vertice*

which means that if Song would only let him join the ring of them that sing around her, Gladness would lift his head to the stars. He was writing his first long poem, *Purgatorio*, and the joy of yielding to an impulse that came without labor and yet spurred him to laborious toil was inexpressible. It was a deep, exultant joy to beat back and forth for a word, and suddenly to come upon it ; suddenly to write better than he knew how, — to have a phrase, a line, an

image, spring through his pen before he knew that it was there. Revelation of some hiding power somewhere, greater than himself, outside himself, yet leagued with him and ready to lay bare its holy arm and run with swift feet to his help if only he made the rough places smooth, if only he made the paths straight. Not by might, nor by power, but by the spirit. He could not sleep for happiness. Fruitionless drudgery and the crowning instant were alike to him. He had found what he wanted to do in life, and he knew that he could do it.

When he reached his guardian's house, he opened the door noiselessly and mounted the bare stairway to his chamber. High over the poplar-pillared hills, the golden moon was soaring. He seated himself on the floor at his window, and with his head on the golden sill, followed the moon. He could hear his brook, afar and musical, beating melody from its barriers. The future seemed full to overflowing and piercingly sweet. His feeling of bitterness toward the house, which in spite of his love for little Mary was not home, passed from him. His chafing under his surround-

ings, his eager restlessness, the aching languishment of hope deferred, waned. On the shore of his young life, the tide of time that had ebbed and flooded, bearing promises to his feet and bearing them away, halted for a gracious hour and lay still. His cares — his thought for Charlie, his guileless innocent solicitude for his mother's welfare, the memory of the hyacinths in blue bottles in how many casements! — seemed borne beyond his ken and beyond the need of him. Only three years to freedom — three years to his mother! She and he, — they were to have heavenly times together. They had promised each the other.

And in less than the school-year, he was standing on the steamer wharf in the great metropolis. Flowers, baskets of flowers, armfuls of flowers, flowers carried by friends, flowers held aloft by porters, streamed up the gangway to the giant ship like gardens moving. The deck was strewn with flowers. Little Clementine and Mary trod upon them and stood like born princesses. And between her lovely daughters, throned in an easy chair, embowered in roses and with a bouquet

for her footstool, sat beautiful Elizabeth, receiving the farewell embraces of the three hundred friends and acquaintances who had come to bid her Bon Voyage! It was her hour of triumph. Honorable William Kinney had been appointed Minister of the United States to Italy. She and he and her little girls were to sail away from crude America and make their home on the hearth of Art, close to the heart of Poetry. The scene was like a play, a midsummer day's dream. And every one was gay and so glad. Edmund, who with exquisite neatness had dressed himself in his scant best, retreated to the background and stood peering through the press of luxury and warmth at the one face, — the one face. Elizabeth was nervous lest he might go mad, his eyes were so wildly longing. She feared that just at the leave-taking, he might fling himself upon her and cling as he had clung when he was a witless child; or, having parted from her, he might hide himself in the ship so as not to leave her. She had a hundred pretty fears, a hundred little starts and frights and terrors. She tried to keep from glancing at him, his wistful piercing eyes so fastened upon hers. And

once, only once, he strode through the multitude, and folding her hand in his, held it with a pressure that cried to her like speech; it was as if nothing could tear him from the mother whom he had worshipped afar off through the sad long years!

But at last the hour set for sailing was upon them all, and the friends who had trooped to the ship with their joyous good-byes, waved handkerchiefs from the wharf. Elizabeth had seen her son go ashore with them, and she searched for his face in the maze of faces. He was not there. The hawser dropped. She leaned from the side of the ship, and at the final instant discovered him alone in the shadow of the wharf, grasping a pile with both hands for support, his face white, his eyes straining through tears to catch the last glance of farewell that her eyes cast behind. Little marvel that years later she could still write in her journal: "Oh, what a moment was that! His earnest despairing look was photographed on my heart, and Time has never effaced it!"

Frailer and more ethereal grew the steamer. Now she took the crests of the sea like a swimmer. Now she settled to the trough like a slumbering

gull. Soon she no longer seemed to move and have a being. She dropped below the horizon with the dissolving lightness of a cloud! Edmund was alone.

He turned back from the eddying waters. His mother's fondest friend had gone the way of the world. He was alone. Too bereft to look before him, he stumbled through the gloom of the wharves.

His mother was his life — and his mother was gone. His mother was the reason for his endeavors — the cause and reward of his efforts. His mother was gone! The whole world was an inn to him now.

Between him and the sun, the smoke from climbing chimneys blew like flame from wall to wall. He lifted his eyes. Before him towered the turrets and spires of a mighty metropolis more marvelous than the City of Brass. His pulses stirred; he drew a deepening breath. This was the city that he had dreamed to conquer for his mother's sake. He would conquer it. He would make a man of himself for his own sake. He thrust his hands into his pockets,

and his fingers closed upon a pencil. He would make a way for himself. Nothing should stop him, nothing hinder. He would strike out alone and unhampered. He would give himself to poesy. He would cut free from every one.

Ah, but he could not forget the hyacinth that Mary had nursed into bloom with her wasting fingers! He thought of his brother Charlie. He could not cut free from Charlie; he could not cut free from any one who needed him! A compassionating tenderness set its tremulous touch along his lip. He had given himself to poesy, but in the same hour he gave himself to Dame Care, the invited fairy, whose outward similitude is grievous, but whose ways are memories of content.

XX

THE INFINITE SHORE

THE graybeards in Norwich Town who used to quote 'Seven grains to the hill and three to the harvest' would be in high disfavor nowadays. Nowadays we know that heaven never intended that four out of every seven children should die without a chance to play, or that little lads should not be set like saplings in a garden. Edmund's youth was cramped and shaded, yet he grew to manhood as fair on every side as a tree that is surrounded by sun. John, the Beloved Disciple who drank of the chalice of life, saw in visions a land that needed neither sun nor moon. Perhaps little Edmund who loved so ardently tasted of that same chalice.

His mother did not always sail away or dwell in Tuscany. Her husband, the Honorable Minister, died at fourscore years, and Elizabeth,

beautiful in a youth of spirit that Time could not dim, came back to Edmund, her dearest son. In the far days of his boyhood, she had sat on the steamer deck throned amid flowers; but in her latter years, she sat throned in the home that he had prepared for her, clad in the sweetest silk, the frailest lace, with his love and honors at her feet. Her hair looked even more ethereal with the silver dust that Time sprinkled over it than with the gold dust which her fingers were wont to scatter. And she took her son's face in her exquisite hands and kissed him just as she had kissed him in his childhood; and her eyes welled with happiness, and his eyes brimmed. Edmund was irrepressible in his tenderness of her, and in a kind of celestial gaiety. Whatever his cares, he never faltered.

The dryad Anna was not with them. Anna had not been born in Norwich, and you remember that not to have been born in Norwich nor even in New England was considered an unforgivable blot in the eyes of the Elect. When Edmund had come home again from college, Anna was gone, — flown like a bird before frost.

Her family had tried to live through the wintry disapproval of Norwich Town and win a crumb of warmth. But the Elect would not open so much as a blind to them. Nipped with the cold at last, they sold the Doorstep House, packed their goods, and returned to the unmentionable State of New York from which they had come. No one could tell Edmund where they had gone. What did Edmund do? He waited till he was twenty years of age before he married. And then he married a little wife as near like pretty Anna as one young lady wren is like another.

Elizabeth's old friends gathered in Edmund's home, and Edmund came and went as self-forgetful as in the days when he was giving his first surprise party and handed a raspberry vinegar to Cousin Lucrece. But after his marriage, the party was his own private affair, and he paid for all the cakes.

Elizabeth lived to see her son honored in two continents as gentleman, poet, critic, wit, scholar, financier. Her dream was granted. More than all else, he was kind. With his heart of song, he followed the path of toil, while the life which

he dreamed to live emerged from a mist of hopes like one of the Islands of the Blessed, only to dissolve and disappear in the sea of unselfishness. Noble in candor, unswerving in loyalty, touching in sincerity, fine in friendship, chivalrous to a degree beyond the comprehension of the Philistine. He never spoke or thought a blighting word. Narrowness of faith was not in him. He was afraid of nothing in life or death.

He turned to business for the sake of earning leisure for poetry, but both his leisure and purse went with his gift of himself. I have heard it said that if he had not spent his first-rate powers on third-rate beginners and on the needy, he would not have been constrained to toil by day and work by night as best he could manage it. It is true. But there is not a word in any gospel to show who is third-rate or who is first, or whether he who helps his brother is not a better judge of whom he helps than he who carps.

Edmund's interest in others was spontaneous and without measure. He did more to encourage young writers both in America and England, he gave himself in more ways to strengthen literature

